



South East Region Conservation Alliance Inc.

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13 June, 2011

The Premier
Barry O'Farrell
NSW State Government

Dear Premier,

The proposed logging of the native forest in Bermagui is of great concern to the 13 organisations which are under the SERCA auspices.

SERCA is objecting to this logging of Bermagui on many levels but the most important aspect is the survival of our national icon: the koala.

The koala is found only in Australia; has been on Earth for at least 25 million years and has co-existed with humans for 60,000 to 120,000 years. Before the arrival of Europeans there were millions of koalas living in Australian forests. In fact, as late as 1865, koalas were seen on the main street in Bega, New South Wales. However, by the 1930s the koala was almost hunted to extinction for its fur.

The koala is now protected by law but much of its environment is still available for logging. Koalas depend on large trees in mature forests for their survival. Sadly, the koala is now listed as vulnerable and may soon be listed federally as a threatened species.

The koala is competing with the logging industry for its home. Piecemeal logging is not an answer to the koala's plight. Sporadic logging prevents koalas' natural wanderings and migrations through the forests. There are only about 50 koalas at the most left in far south coast of New South Wales. This is a shameful statistic. Decency demands that we reverse this situation.

The fact that Forests NSW sent letters to landholders whose property adjoins the intended logging sites telling of the intended logging of Bermagui State Forest, starting with compartment 2001, acknowledges that it is a koala habitat. Forests NSW's own data bases have confirmed

the presence of koalas in these areas. Because Forests NSW has acknowledged that these forests are koala habitat, these sites should be retained both for future koala occupation and as important links between forested areas to the north and south of Bermagui.

Where the koalas can survive, so can other rare, endangered and vulnerable species like the Swift Parrots, who rely on blossoms from mature spotted gums on their winter migrations between New South Wales and Tasmania. A thriving koala population indicates a healthy forest. Healthy forests equal a healthy environment.

If we declare logging of native forests off limits and switch commercial operations to plantations, there is still hope that the koala population could be revitalised. However, if the logging industry is continued to be allowed to do business as usual, those few remaining koalas don't have any hope.

The koala is loved worldwide, and along with the kangaroo, symbolise Australia to most of the world. If we foolishly let it disappear, we are doing ourselves, and the koala, a terrible disservice.

SERCA looks forward to your response. We are hopeful that it will be one that shows foresight and wisdom.

Faithfully yours,

Lois Katz
SERCA Member

Copies to:

Robyn Parker, NSW Minister for the Environment
Katrina Hodgkinson, NSW Minister for Primary Industries
Andrew Constance, NSW Minister for Ageing and Disability Services
Tony Burke, Federal Minister for the Environment