



Dr Bronte Somerset
5-7 Cobargo Street
QUAAMA NSW 2550

Dear Dr Somerset

Thank you for your e-mail of 21 August 2012 to the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, the Hon Tony Burke MP, concerning the koala in the south-east of New South Wales. The minister has passed your e-mail to me for reply.

The Australian Government is committed to the protection and recovery of the koala, one of Australia's iconic species. Koalas hold a special place in our community. On 30 April 2012 the Minister announced his decision to add the koala populations of Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory to the threatened species list in the vulnerable category under national environmental law. This listing gives the koala an extra layer of protection including protection of its habitat.

I acknowledge the concerns you have for the long-term survival of koalas in the forests of south-east New South Wales. The management and protection of forest areas in New South Wales is undertaken in accordance with Regional Forest Agreements signed by the Australian and New South Wales governments. Under these agreements, ongoing forest management, including harvesting operations and the protection of threatened species are the responsibility of the New South Wales government. While national environmental law protects matters of national environmental significance, including nationally listed threatened species like the koala, there are exemptions from the approval provisions for certain actions, including actions being taken in accordance with a Regional Forest Agreement. Under these Regional Forest Agreements however, management prescriptions or actions identified in approved recovery plans are expected to be implemented as a matter of priority.

A national koala recovery plan is to be developed for the listed koala, to commence following the expiration of the National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy at the end of 2014, currently being jointly implemented by the Commonwealth and relevant jurisdictions. Recovery plans set out those actions necessary to stop the decline of, and support the recovery of, a threatened species. Upon adoption of the recovery plan under national environmental law, forest management operations in those Regional Forest Agreement regions supporting koalas will be expected to adhere to, and achieve, actions specified in the recovery plan.

I note that you have had discussions with the Minister's adviser Ms Sofia Zeritis. She has advised me that she looks forward to having further contact with you in the future.

Thank you for taking the time to write on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Matthew White
A/g Assistant Secretary
Wildlife Branch

25 October 2012