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Dear Stan,

RE: LETTERS TO THE EDITOR – “KOALA PROTECTION AT LAST?”

Last Tuesday the Federal Government declared the last 30-50 of our genetically distinct group of Strzelecki koalas as “Vulnerable”. That declaration only impacts on developments on private land. Unfortunately Federal responsibilities for threatened species under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act have been devolved to state governments for all forestry areas which are covered by a Regional Forest Agreement.

On Friday, the Round 1 Biodiversity Fund projects were announced: \$2,646,500.00 has been approved for the Southern Rivers CMA to support restoration of the koala and long-nosed potoroo habitat here on the south coast and \$2,827,100.00 was approved for Bega River and koala habitat recovery to return koalas to the Bega Valley.

Both these projects covering the next 6 years are restricted to private land whereas the critical adverse impact on koala habitat corridors occurs in our State Forests.

Thankfully \$1,935,000.00 has also been approved for Forests NSW and the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, to protect, enhance and connect habitat sustaining the last known koala population in NSW Far South Coast forests. This project will “protect 2,800 ha of core koala habitat, create harvest exclusion zones on State Forest and support initiatives to locate alternative timber resources, establish partnerships with indigenous communities and introduce integrated monitoring & management actions to improve the recovery potential of the koala population”. This situation has at last been recognised by our governments as important.

Hopefully this will at last see the end of the decimation of our critical habitat forests around Gulaga and Biamanga National Parks. It will allow the recovery of our unique koala population along with many other species whose lives have been so violently disrupted. It will also see the end of so many of us having to interrupt the work of logging contractors stupidly and illegally sent in there by our NSW Government. Is this war now over?

Yours sincerely,

Seán Burke