



South East Region Conservation Alliance Inc.

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Media Release

Call to Keneally: Don't kiss last koalas goodbye

Conservationists are appealing to the Premier to save the last remaining koalas on the far south coast of NSW from logging.

The koalas have been located in Government sponsored surveys in Mumbulla State Forest, where logging for woodchips is due to start in March.

The South East Region Conservation Alliance (SERCA) wrote to Premier Keneally just before Christmas in an urgent bid to have her intervene to stop the logging.

"We cannot afford to risk these koalas now, for a loss making native forest logging industry driven by the imperatives of the woodchipping sector," according to Prue Acton.

"Native forest logging loses \$14.4 million a year for NSW taxpayers and now it is going to cost us our last koalas on the far south coast as well," said Ms. Acton.

The threat to the south coast koalas comes against a background of dramatic national decline in koala numbers and efforts by the Australian Koala Foundation to have the animal listed as nationally threatened species.

Koala numbers on the far south coast crashed last century after decades of hunting for the export fur trade, which only stopped when US customers stopped buying the skins.

The population has never recovered due to habitat loss from logging and agriculture and the disease, chlamydia.

Australia's top koala experts recognise the far south coast as a region where our national icon is in serious trouble.

Leading koala expert Dr Steve Phillips said on ABC radio recently: "We have got the management prescriptions (for koalas) wrong, especially in the SE The small area of koala habitat remaining is such a precious resource They have just got to be protected so they can continue to expand there is no longer any argument about what is important habitat".

"SERCA understands that there is wrangling going on between different parts of the State bureaucracy about how koalas should be "managed" in logging, but in the mean time, the trees in Mumbulla have been marked up for logging and they are now just waiting for the chainsaws to arrive."

John Hibberd said that the conservationists have also written to federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett on behalf of the Mumbulla koalas.

“While the Commonwealth has not yet listed this animal as a threatened species, there is enough evidence around now about its decline that we simply cannot afford to take any further risks with its future.”

“We don’t believe that Kristina Keneally will want to leave the demise of the koala on the far south coast as part of her legacy. She can save these animals and we are asking her to act,” Prue Acton said.

For more information:Prue Acton, SERCA

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Photographs of local Koala available.

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