

MEDIA RELEASE: STATE GOVERNMENT DECLARES LOGGING WAR ON FAR SOUTH COAST  
KOALAS. KEITH HUGHES 05.08.2011

Conservationists on the far south coast are accusing the NSW Government of declaring war on the koala by systematically logging all the remaining koala habitat in coastal forests between Bermagui and the Victorian border.

“The recent resumption of logging in Bermagui State Forest is just the beginning,” according to Keith Hughes, a Bega Valley Shire Councillor and convenor of the South East Region Conservation Alliance (SERCA).

Mr Hughes says that the current logging schedule over the next few months is a grave threat to the koala.

“Bermagui Forest logging will be followed by woodchipping of just about every other coastal forest where koalas have been located in the past 10 years,” he says.

“The woodchipping of Mumbulla Forest, subsequently acknowledged as illegal by Forests NSW, last year was a major blow to the koala as a species on the far south coast.”

“The State Government called a pre-election halt to further logging in Mumbulla and planned logging in neighbouring forests of Murrah, Tanja and Bermagui in response to sustained community protests.”

“Now that the election is over and the new Government has a record majority, it is displaying total contempt for public opinion and for the future of Australia’s most popular native animal,” Mr Hughes says.

“Koala surveys over recent years show that there are probably fewer than 50 koalas left on the far south coast and their stronghold is in Mumbulla State Forest, just north of Bega.”

“There are scattered populations in the adjoining coastal forests and these forests are critical if the species is to recover and re-establish itself in the region,” he says.

“The koala was once the pin up species for the woodchipping industry because they viewed it as one of the few threatened species that does not require tree hollows to survive.”

“Intensive logging removes hollows from the forest because they only occur in old trees.”

“We now know that woodchipping is just as bad for the koala as it is for the hollow dependant species.”

“While it was a combination of factors such as fire, disease, land clearing for agriculture and predation that has brought the koala to its current dire situation, it is now logging for woodchips which has the potential to finish them off,” Mr Hughes says.

“Community protests are continuing and the local community will not give up on these forests without a big fight,” he says.

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