

MEDIA RELEASE: HANDS OFF ROYAL CAMP KOALAS, DAILAN PUGH 07.07.2013

Because of the paltry fine issued by the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) for logging Koala High Use Areas in Royal Camp State Forest the Forestry Corporation remain totally unrepentant as they plan to resume logging in some of the best Koala habitat in the Northern Rivers region.

Royal Camp State Forest is 16 kilometres south-west of Casino.

Spokesperson for NEFA, Dailan Pugh, said he was disgusted with the pathetic response from the NSW Government to the Forestry Corporation's continuing refusal to thoroughly search for Koala scats (faecal pellets) to identify Koala High Use Areas and protect them from logging.

"Last August we found a Koala High Use Area being logged in Royal Camp, with 3 others planned for imminent logging. Our plea to the Ministers for the Environment and Primary Industries resulted in logging of those areas being stopped, though it continued nearby with at least 2 other Koala High Use Areas subsequently logged.

"The Forestry Corporation continued to log Koala High Use Areas under the nose of the EPA while the Ministers repeatedly refused our requests for an independent assessment.

"Last week, almost a year later, the EPA belatedly issued 3 Penalty Notices to the Forestry Corporation for logging within a Koala High Use Area, logging within the buffer of a Koala High Use Area and failing to mark the boundary of a Koala High Use Area.

"These entail \$300 fines for each Penalty Notice, but with no requirements for remediation or protection of compensatory habitat. Such paltry fines provide no incentive to make the Forestry Corporation do the right thing, particularly as their Minister lets them get away with it and they make a profit from their illegal logging.

"The Forestry Corporation planned to resume logging in Royal Camp in June but have been held up by wet weather. Now that it is drying out we expect them to attempt to resume logging any day.

"Last Thursday we inspected two small sections of the area they are intending to log and found both contained Koala High Use Areas. Given that the Forestry Corporation still refuse to accept that they need to thoroughly search for Koala scats, it is evident they will go on trashing core Koala habitat.

"From our investigations it is evident that Royal Camp is one of the most important areas of public land for Koalas in the Northern Rivers region. The loggers should not be allowed near it again. This forest should be fully protected as a national park" Mr. Pugh said.

Based on his inspections of Royal Camp State Forest, wildlife expert David Milledge has concluded:

"The level of Koala activity revealed by these searches is amongst the highest I have recorded in my experience of over 20 years conducting Koala scat surveys in coastal and escarpment forests in north-eastern NSW. This highlights the

significance of Royal Camp State Forest in supporting a dense local Koala population and possibly one of the most important on public land in the region".

FOR COMMENT CONTACT DAILAN PUGH 66 807063 OR DAVID MILLEDGE ON 66 854430

For report on inspection: NEFA Inspection of Royal Camp SF\_Cmpt 13