



Environment,
Climate Change
& Water

Our reference: MD10/638 and MD10/1208

Dr Bronte Somerset
bjsomerset@gmail.com

Dear Dr Somerset

I refer to your emails of February and March 2010 regarding the protection of koalas in the Murrumbidgee and Mumbulla State Forests on the NSW South Coast. Your letter was referred to the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) for reply.

The NSW Government shares your concerns. DECCW is committed to protecting koalas and is actively engaged in promoting their protection and recovery. In 2008, the NSW Koala Recovery Plan was released by DECCW, with the aim of introducing state-wide protection for koalas. So far, the Recovery Plan has already allocated over \$1.2 million to recovery actions and significant additions of koala habitat have been included in the State's reserve system.

DECCW is also working closely with the Australian Government and other states to develop and implement the *National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009 – 2014*, which provides a national framework for koala conservation.

Within NSW, specifically on the South Coast, between 2007 and 2009, DECCW coordinated a two year survey of koalas in the Biamanga/Mumbulla area, in order to improve our understanding of the local koala population and the potential impacts of forestry operations on them. The survey was undertaken with the participation of the local community and Forests NSW.

DECCW is now using this information to assist in discussions with Forests NSW to define appropriate management and regulatory approaches for the protection of the population. An interim report on the survey and the NSW Koala Recovery Plan can both be found on the DECCW website at www.threatenedspecies.environment.nsw.gov.au.

As detailed in the report, the population is small (fewer than 50 adults) and it is utilising forests in National Parks and reserves, as well as those in Murrumbidgee, Mumbulla and Bermagui State Forests.

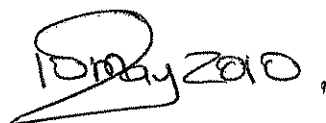
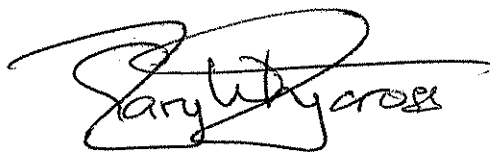
DECCW has also recently commissioned the Australian National University to examine independently the data obtained from the surveys and determine whether there is a relationship between koala presence and the distributions of the various tree species, combinations of species and size of trees. When this analysis is completed, it will be used to assist in guiding future management of the koalas and their habitat.

DECCW will continue to work with Forests NSW to identify the most appropriate approaches for the longer term protection of koalas within the State forests of the Eden Forestry Region. These areas were set aside by the Eden Regional Forestry Agreement 1999 to provide a guaranteed timber supply to industry, in exchange for significant additions to the National Parks reserve system.

The Government's forest decisions in 1996 and 1998 added 94,000 hectares to national parks and reserves in the Eden Forestry Region and brought the total area of the reserve system in the region to around 267,800 hectares.

Please be assured that the NSW Government and DECCW are working to protect the koala population and, at the same time, promoting regional economic development and employment.

Yours sincerely



GARY WHYTCROSS
Director South
Environment Protection and Regulation