



31-Jan-18

## Submission on Murrah Flora Reserves Draft Working Plan



Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the State Forest Murrah Flora Reserves. We start by recognising OEH staff, Aboriginal and other conservationists whose evidence made saving our *South Coast Koalas* and 'overarching values of the reserves' overwhelmingly inevitable.

**NPWS managing one landscape under these two NSW Acts (Forestry & Parks) is not practical long-term.** My management consultancy experience is from Industry, Government, National Parks Association (NSW) & Gulaga National Park Board (2007-2017). Projects include *Unspoilt South Coast & Alps-to-Coast* World Heritage.

NSW Ministers said Murrah "PROTECTS SOUTH COAST KOALAS & LOCAL TIMBER INDUSTRY" (MR 1-Mar-16). [Environment Minister Speakman told the ABC that flora reserves had the same protection as national parks.](#)

But local Liberal Andrew Constance, told media they kept the State Forest tenure "instead of national parks so in the future the operation of harvesting them again could be considered." (Bega District News 4-Mar-16). Would Industry repay the \$2.5M paid-out? How many of 278 jobs quoted depend on native forest sawlogs? We reference\* opportunities within the 2017 Murrah Draft Plan, under *three recommendations*:

### 1. Add Murrah to existing Aboriginal-owned and NPWS co-managed Biamanga National Park

[\*P.1] *'The primary purpose ... is to conserve the south coast's last known koala population and the protection of a natural and cultural landscape incorporating Biamanga and Gulaga national parks, both of which are Aboriginal owned and managed by a majority Aboriginal owner board.'*

[\*P.3] *'The boards aspire to ... the Murrah Flora Reserves ultimately being added to Biamanga NP.'*

We understand this NSW Government very nearly declared these Murrah Reserves as National Park! Mean-spirited State Forest tenure prevents Aboriginal Owners adding Murrah to their Biamanga NP Lease. To attract long-term investment funding of Aboriginal jobs, we all need reclassification to National Park.

### 2. Help create Aboriginal Jobs - in South Coast Tourism & Natural Forest Management.

**Partnerships** are key to strategic development of careers based on this Gulaga-Biamanga Landscape. Legal Aboriginal Ownership agreements already exist between NPWS, Bega, Merrimans & Wagonga LALCs (the 2018 NSW ACH Bill, and Crown Lands, should help strengthen partnership opportunities with LALCs). South East LLS, Bega Valley Shire Council, and Sapphire Coast Tourism can also help foster job opportunities.

**Tourism** jobs are promoted via the NSW Government's innovative 'Unspoilt South Coast' Destination NSW and 'Nature through Aboriginal Eyes' Yuin Tourism projects. Also [\*P.3] *'Tourism potential ... in Australia's Coastal Wilderness as designated by the Australian Government's National Landscapes Program (2016).'*

**Forest management** opportunities in Murrah are 'centre-stage' within this Gulaga-Biamanga Landscape. e.g. 'Adaptive Management' enables a start on restoring dangerously dry regrowth 'Matchstick Forests'.

**Fire management** must evolve incorporating Yuin Heritage **Cultural Burns** based on South Coast Forests.

### 3. Connect, protect and restore natural forest - for Tourism, Koala & other unique Threatened Species

National & NSW Koala Strategies are due mid-2018. Plans for hollows-dependent species also need update.

**Acknowledgement:** The 'Double Biamanga' (2xB) Project will celebrate legal rights earned by Aboriginal Owners' negotiation, 2018 review of their 2006 [Biamanga National Park Lease](#) and 2014 '[Yuin Parks' Plan of Management](#). Young Aboriginal leadership includes Daniel Morgan and Cathy Thomas (2017 Deputy Chairs of Biamanga & Gulaga NP Boards). Board conservation colleagues late mates and mentors Dane Wimbush (1934-2015) and John Hibberd (1945-2012) left their mark in the historic PoM document and knowledge shared with Aboriginal board members.



*Iconic landscape photo by Richard Green (1940-2015)  
- with Mimosa Rocks NP in the foreground*

Murrah Forest, adjoining Biamanga NP (top centre), lies between the Bega River (far left) & Bermagui River (far right below Gulaga NP)  
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