

ChipBusters
SERCA South East Region Conservation Alliance
CHIPSTOP

MEDIA RELEASE

26.03.10

Earth Hour -- Keeping the Lights On for South East Koalas

"Earth Hour 2010 marks perhaps the last chance for the last small colony of koalas living between Canberra and Victoria", said spokespersons for key conservation groups today.

"State Forests, the NSW Government logging agency, is demanding to woodchip the koalas' forest home."

"The people of NSW don't want to turn the lights out on the South East Forest's last koala family. Earth Hour is about the survival of the planet and all the creatures on it, not just our own selfish species."

"Ninety five per cent* of the south east forests next to be logged (Mumbulla and Murrah State Forests) is destined for the Eden Woodchip Mill.

State Forests has publicly conceded (at a meeting in the south coast town of Tathra, in March this year) that after the woodchipping operation, all available larger trees so vital for food and shelter will have been clearfelled in these forests. Moreover, it will be at least 100 years before similar trees will again be available for wildlife".

The last tiny colony of koalas on the south coast live in Mumbulla and Murrah State Forest. There are only 30 to 50 of them left in the whole south east region. Once there were 100,000 koalas in the nearby Bega Valley but all this habitat was cleared for farming, dairying and timber last century. Most of the koalas were shot or trapped for a short-lived fur trade.

Koalas are now barely hanging on in the South East Forests but their last haven, Mumbulla State Forest and the adjoining Murrah, are next on the woodchipping block. State Forests has pre-empted the NSW Government and declared that it will start the woodchipping of these forests within days**.

This is despite current discussions with the National Parks and Wildlife Service whose recent expert survey has finally located this tiny colony and its critical surrounding feed area*** This is nevertheless marginal habitat but the best that is available after the loss of the best Bega Valley forests."

"The 20 member groups of South East Region Conservation Alliance along with peak forest campaign groups ChipBusters and CHIPSTOP are calling on NSW Premier Kristina Keneally to intervene urgently. Mumbulla and Murrah State Forests must not be woodchipped or logged but rather must be added to the adjoining Biamanga National Park (maps available)."

"Woodchipping critical koala habitat is not on. We have asked Fireman Keneally to put out the latest biodiversity 'bushfire' lit by State Forests in reckless disregard for outcomes for the koalas.

So far the Premier has ignored repeated requests for us to meet her and resolve this extinction crisis for an entire regional population of koalas. We nevertheless hope to meet with her in the coming week."

Contacts:

Noel Plumb - Chipbusters - Sydney & Canberra – 0419 606 686 (back up mobile until Telstra dud 0425 23 83 03 is returned to service)

Prue Acton OBE - SERCA - Merimbula – 0264945144 -- in Canberra Solander Gallery Yarralumla as special guest of Governor General Quentin Bryce -- 6pm tonight mobile 0419 383 203 (no coverage in Merimbula)
Harriett Swift - CHIPSTOP -- Bega -- 0414 908 997.

* SF Harvest Plan

** State Forests Media Release 10.03.10

*** DEECWA Survey

**** This logging costs taxpayers in many ways as Forests NSW native forest operations are heavily subsidised!

Maps & Images available

Image South East Forests (Yurammie) clearfelling by State Forests of lost Koala Habitat. 2009 Prue Acton OBE in foreground. Photo courtesy of SMH Peter Rae.

Koala Footprints on Lizard Rd, Mumbullah State Forests