



South East Region Conservation Alliance Inc

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MEDIA RELEASE: NSW FORESTS GIVEN GREEN LIGHT TO DECIMATE THREATENED SOUTH COAST KOALAS. SERCA. PRUE ACTON, HARRIETT SWIFT. 01.05.2012

Threatened NSW south coast koalas have been left out of Commonwealth protection for the rest of Australia's koala populations and could be regionally extinct in a few years.

Logging is due to begin in far south coast koala habitat within days. This habitat is in public forest managed by the NSW Government and logging contractors have priority over conservation.

Spokesperson, Prue Acton on behalf of South East Region Conservation Alliance (SERCA) said, "Whilst Koalas in NSW, Queensland and the ACT will be classified as Vulnerable under a protected listing by Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke this will not save the last remaining koalas of Far South Coast NSW."

"Logging is driving Far South Coast NSW koalas to extinction. With around 30 of these genetically distinct coastal koalas (Strezlecki genotype) remaining this announcement makes no difference."

The Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke has said his decision to list the koala followed a rigorous scientific assessment by the Threatened Species Scientific Committee, which gathered information from a variety of experts over the past three years.

Conservationists have also welcomed the NSW Labor Party's support for federal threatened species listing for the koala, but warn it will do little or nothing to help local koalas.

Spokesperson for SERCA, Harriett Swift, says that a federal listing would be good, but on its own will do nothing for far south koalas living in State Forests.

"This is because the principal Commonwealth law protecting threatened species, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999, does not apply in State Forests," Ms Swift said.

"Virtually all of our local koalas are in State Forests and thus would not benefit from any Commonwealth listing."

"All of Our State Forests are covered by Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) and the current law falsely assumes that these provide sufficient protection for threatened species."

"We have seen time and time again that threatened species prescriptions are either useless or are flouted by State logging agencies."

"Since the commencement of the RFAs there have been hundreds of instances of threatened species rules being breached either by Forests NSW or by logging contractors," Ms Swift explained. "A license to log is a license to kill and harm threatened species, to say nothing of the more common animals such as wombats and lyrebirds"

which are not protected at all.”

“In NSW, State Ministers have demonstrated their contempt for the welfare of forest animals by suspending the normal protection offered by the State’s own threatened species listing in order to facilitate logging in endangered animal habitat.”

While we welcome Labor Spokesperson, Luke Foley’s support for the koala’s NSW listing, it is only very recently that a State Labor government permitted logging in koala habitat in Bermagui and Mumbulla forests.

“If Mr Foley really wants to help ensure the survival of these koala he should persuade his federal colleague to end the EPBC Act exemption for RFA areas.” concluded Ms Swift.

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