



MEDIA RELEASE

Environment groups call on Premier to halt logging in core koala habitat

Eight NSW environment groups have written to Premier Berejiklian today urging her to intervene to protect an area of Gladstone State Forest, near Bellingen, vital to the protection of koalas in NSW.

Logging operations are planned in Gladstone State Forest where hundreds of koala scats were found by community groups in July and August 2017. The groups say the planned logging operations, on top of operations carried out in August 2017, highlight how the regulation of public native forests is failing to protect koalas.

Despite Forestry Corporation's own ecologists finding extensive evidence of koala scats¹, and the hundreds of scats found last August by members of the Bellingen Environment Centre and Kalang River Forest Alliance, no steps have been taken to protect Gladstone's koalas. Polling in the north coast seats of Ballina and Lismore in December 2017 showed people were very aware of the plight of koalas, and highly supportive of new national parks for their protection.

North East Forest Alliance spokesperson Dailan Pugh said: "Koala populations on the north coast have declined 50% in the past two decades. Logging has been proven to be contributing to this decline. We must protect the remaining breeding colonies to give koalas a fighting chance. Gladstone has been found to support a significant koala population, including a mother and her joey. This core koala habitat needs to be protected."

Nambucca Valley Conservation Association spokesperson Lyn Orrego said: "The State Government has allowed Forestry Corporation to undertake intensive, clearfell logging—not valid under logging rules—of 23,000 hectares of high-quality koala habitat in our north coast public native forests over the past 10 years. We implore the Premier to take seriously our request for a stay of execution for the koalas of Gladstone State Forest. Unprecedented high levels of evidence of breeding koala populations in Gladstone State Forest have been found."

Bellingen Environment Centre spokesperson Ashley Love said: "This is exceptional evidence of occupancy and demonstrates this area of forest is entirely unsuitable for logging. Forestry Corporation's own ecologists have identified the importance of this area for koalas, yet no protections have been put in place. The Premier must intervene."

Frances Pike of the Australian Forests and Climate Alliance said: "Not only is our forest wildlife getting hammered by logging, it is driving climate change too. Forests are the best technology we have for drawing down carbon dioxide, and this is recognised in the Paris Agreement. The government can't credibly claim they're tackling climate change when they're sanctioning industrialised logging."

¹ See Forestry Corporation harvest plan for these compartments showing koala locations - http://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/714014/gladstone_state_forest_compartments_228_231_232_and_233_harvesting_haulage_and_roading_plans.pdf

NSW National Parks Association Senior Ecologist Dr Oisín Sweeney said: “This is clear evidence the logging laws are broken beyond repair and are failing to protect koalas. The government should use the end of the Regional Forest Agreements to protect koala habitat before we see more local extinctions.”

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2: The aftermath of logging in koala habitat in Gladstone State Forest in August 2017



1: Koala habitat reduced to piles of debris following logging in Gladstone State Forest in August 2017

Ends.