



NCCNSW Forests Campaign Media Release

Last Chance for Koalas

Date: 29 September 1998

Summary: Joint Media Statement - 29 September 1998 issued by NSW Forest Alliance, North-East Forest Alliance, South-East Forest Alliance, Nature Conservation Council, Total Environment Centre, National Parks Association, South-East Conservation Council c/- Level 5, 362 Kent Street, Sydney NSW 2000 Tel: 02 9279 2466, 02 9279 2855

Attn: Environment,

Science, Rural, Tourism, Resource, Political, Current Affairs, Talks and News Reporters / Producers / Presenters LAST CHANCE FOR KOALAS NSW conservationists today warned that a unique koala population faced extinction unless its habitat was protected from woodchipping by the imminent NSW government decision on the South East Forests. "The Carr Government must not only protect the habitat where koalas currently exist but also where they can re-establish and recover," the groups said. "Koalas are facing extinction in the SE Forests. This genetically unique population has suffered a catastrophic decline as a result of a series of impacts, the last of which has been woodchipping. There are only two known remnant groups left in the region. Both of these face the threat of further clearfelling of their habitat," said Mr Jeff Angel of the Total Environment Centre.

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NSW conservationists today warned that a unique koala population faced extinction unless its habitat was protected from woodchipping by the imminent NSW government decision on the South East Forests. "The Carr Government must not only protect the habitat where koalas currently exist but also where they can re-establish and recover," the groups said.

"Koalas are facing extinction in the SE Forests. This genetically unique population has suffered a catastrophic decline as a result of a series of impacts, the last of which has been woodchipping. There are only two known remnant groups left in the region. Both of these face the threat of further clearfelling of their habitat," said Mr Jeff Angel of the Total Environment Centre.

A scientific assessment undertaken by the Commonwealth Government concluded that the area required to sustain a viable koala population in the region is a minimum of 52,000 ha of suitable habitat. "The regional forest assessment showed that suitable koala habitat is patchily distributed in the coastal and hinterland forests in the region", said **Mr Chris Allen of the South East Forests Conservation Council**. "None of the reserve options developed by the stakeholders got anywhere near this target,"

Conservationists have therefore proposed a special koala protection regime in production forests. "In their negotiations with government and industry, conservation groups compromised by proposing that only half the area shown to be important for koalas be reserved; provided that unreserved habitat were protected from clearfelling. This will allow the protection of areas sustaining known breeding groups.

Areas outside reserves will be managed with strict guidelines under joint community control", said Mr Allen.

Spokesperson for the National Parks Association, Mr Noel Plumb stated, "this will be the first instance in Australia where the local conservation and timber communities could co-operate in genuinely ecologically sustainable management of a public forest. A NSW government commitment to this initiative would provide the essential recognition for the importance of off-reserve management for the protection of many Australian species and would be widely applauded."

Because of the plight of the koalas in NSW, the Carr government has just initiated a statewide Koala Recovery Program. "The recovery of the population in south-eastern NSW will be seen as a litmus test of just how serious the government is in this endeavor. A decision to continue clearfelling of koala habitat in this region will rightly be seen as an act of gross hypocrisy by the NSW government. The majority of the Australian public opposes the woodchipping of native forests. The clearfelling of koala habitat for woodchips can no longer be a part of forest management," said the conservation groups.

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LAST CHANCE FOR KOALAS

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