

**North East Forest Alliance (see [nefa.org.au](http://nefa.org.au))**

## **BRAEMAR KOALAS UNDER IMMINENT THREAT**

A NEFA search of 3 ha of an area marked up for imminent logging in Braemar State Forest (24km south of Casino) on 28 July 2019 identified 42 trees with Koala scats under them, with the whole area qualifying as a Koala High Use Area (HUA). The high use area extended well outside the area we had assessed, and indicated that others are likely. We had found a Koala area of outstanding importance.

The Forestry Corporation's plan was to log under the old rules which required the identification and protection of Koala HUAs. The forest was marked-up ready for logging yet there was no evidence of the required thorough searches for Koalas scats having been undertaken before us. They had identified a small (0.9ha) Koala HUA, though it was really far, far bigger.

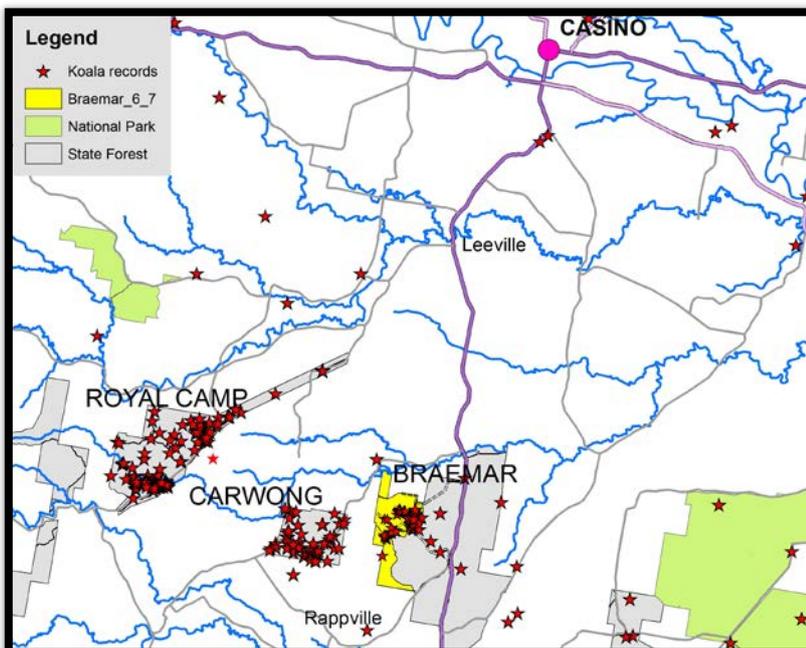
NEFA wrote to Premier Gladys Berejiklian asking her to urgently intervene to ensure that independent surveys are undertaken to identify all important Koala habitat in Braemar State Forest before logging starts, and to ensure that a full assessment is undertaken of Koala habitat on the Richmond River lowlands given their demonstrated importance as Koala habitat.

Instead we were told that the Forestry Corporation are preparing a new logging plan using the new logging rules, which was released on August 31. They removed the requirement to search for and protect Koala HUAs. Now if they see a Koala in a tree they have to wait for it to leave before cutting it down, and at best 5 small potential feed trees per hectare will be protected.

NEFA has since undertaken 2 further assessments and now consider that Koala HUAs are likely to cover over 100ha. These are the most extensive HUAs known on State Forests. There are likely to be 60-90 Koalas in the logging area. It is source habitat, within a Koala population of national significance. Now that protection for Koala HUAs have been removed the Forestry Corporation have identified Royal Camp State Forest next for logging, in an area where they were stopped by Koala HUAs in 2013.

### **THE MOST IMPORTANT ACTION WE CAN DO TO SAVE KOALAS IS TO PROTECT AND REHABILITATE WHERE THEY LIVE.**

Logging is scheduled to start in Braemar SF on 13 September. The Government doesn't care, you need to make them. Write to your local members and local papers, post it on social media, speak to anyone who will listen. A rally is being held in Braemar at 10am on 15 September.



**PLEASE HELP SAVE BRAEMAR'S KOALAS FROM PREMIER BEREJIKLIAN'S ASSAULT**

# RICHMOND RIVER LOWLAND PUBLIC FORESTS

## ESSENTIAL FOR KOALA'S SURVIVAL

The evidence is that the remnant forests on and around the Richmond River floodplain are particularly important for the future of Koalas (and many other species) as drought refuges in an era of global heating. NEFA's surveys have so far identified significant Koala populations remaining in public forests adjoining the floodplain in Royal Camp, Carwong, Gibberagee and Braemar State Forests.

The dry Spotted Gum-Gey Box-Grey Gum-Red Gum forests of the Richmond lowlands are vitally important for a plethora of now threatened species. Unfortunately they have been logged fairly heavily. With most larger red gums, grey gum and grey box utilised by Koalas it is evident that any further reduction in feed trees will have a direct impact on this significant population.

Back in 2012 and 2013 NEFA had to intervene to stop the Forestry Corporation actively logging Koala High Use Areas (HUAs) in [Royal Camp State Forest](#). They were fined a paltry \$900. With mounting evidence that it, along with the nearby Carwong SF, encompass part of a regionally significant Koala population the then Minister for the Environment requested the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) to determine its significance, with the subsequent report by Dr. Steve Phillips (2014) finding a resident koala population within Royal Camp that *"should be considered important at all levels of assessment"*. Local, regional and national.

An [EPA \(2016\)](#) study of 4 key areas of State forests known to once have good Koala populations once again verified that Royal Camp and Carwong State Forests have significant populations of resident Koalas, finding *"that 80% of Carwong and 58% of Royal Camp State Forest is utilised ... On this basis it can be concluded that habitat in Royal Camp and Carwong is source habitat, where reproduction exceeds mortality on average over time"*. The other 2 State Forests had become sink habitat, with Koalas apparently declining.

A study of Koalas across the Richmond Valley LGA (Phillips and Weatherstone 2015) identified *"two Important Populations"* as *"key source populations for breeding and/or dispersal"*, including *"Habitat to the north of Rappville in the general vicinity of Royal Camp and Carwong State Forests and associated lands"*. NEFA proposed they be protected for Koalas as the [Sandy Creek National Park](#).

In February this year we found widespread evidence of a significant Koala population in [Gibberagee State Forest](#). The Forestry Corporation continued to log Koala HUAs while the EPA were in the forest assessing our complaints. Our appeals to the EPA, Environment Minister and Premier to stop work while the legally required searches were undertaken, and Koala HUAs protected, were in vain. Despite our evidence and having to resort to two blockades we could not make the Forestry Corporation undertake the thorough Koala searches required by their licence. Our offer of using a scat detection dog to undertake a search were rebuffed.

In the end, as a token gesture, the Forestry Corporation protected 1ha of a Koala High Use Area we had identified and in May resumed logging hundreds of hectares of Koala habitat.

Now it is evident that [Braemar State Forest](#) has very extensive Koala HUAs and is a core area for the Koalas of the Richmond Lowlands, one of the few remaining patches with a dense colony of breeding Koalas essential for the persistence of this nationally significant population.

As shown by Braemar, the new logging rules remove the requirement to search for and protect Koala HUAs. Because they no longer have to protect Koala HUAs the Forestry Corporation has already identified Royal Camp for logging after Braemar. The only requirement to retain 5 small Koala feed trees per hectare. We must not let this happen.

North-coast Koala populations have declined by 50% over the past 20 years. It is essential that we protect and restore all remaining Koala habitat on public lands to help give Koalas a future.

### For further Information see:

Sandy Creek National Park Proposal: <https://www.nefa.org.au/koalas>

Braemar audits: <https://www.nefa.org.au/audits>