

NSW'S NEW KOALA RESERVES AREN'T NEW AND DON'T HAVE MANY KOALAS

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The NSW Government announced there would be 12 "new" Koala Reserves as a keystone of its Koala Strategy:

Creating new reserves for koalas and protecting habitat corridors is a key pillar of the Strategy. More than 20,000 hectares of state forest on the Central Coast, Southern Highlands, North Coast, Hawkesbury and Hunter with koala habitat will be set aside as new koala reserves. Over 4000 hectares of native forest with koala habitat will be transferred to the national parks estate

It is fraudulent for the NSW Government to pretend that these are new Koala Reserves. Ten of the 12 Koala Reserves are already protected as part of the informal reserve system (as FMZs 2 and 3). Four have no records of Koalas, and only 2 have "contemporary" records. Only 3 of the north-east reserves have high quality Koala habitat identified within them, and 2 of these have no "contemporary" records to substantiate the models.

Mount Lindesay and Belanglo are the only "new" reserves to include substantial areas of unprotected forest. Mount Lindesay is the only proposed reserve with both identified records and high quality habitat, though at least half these forests are severely degraded by logging dieback and in urgent need of repair. The proposed Belanglo reserve does have a large number of records though these are all recent and are mostly repeat sightings from radio-tracking 2 individuals.

Nine of the proposed "new" reserves are proposed to be created as Flora Reserves that are still owned by the Forestry Corporation but managed by NPWS. The reason for one of these (Mt Lindesay) appears to be native title, though the reason for the others appears to be that they are declared hunting areas - the Government appears intent on allowing hunting in most of the "new" reserves.

There are many state forests known to be far more important for Koalas that the Government has ignored. The selection of these areas has been a cynical political exercise with no attempt to identify and protect the most important Koala habitat on State Forests, with the only apparent criteria being to have no impacts on timber.

Ten of these areas (Oakes, Carrai, Mount Boss, Barrington Tops, Corrabare, Watagan, Olney, Comleroy, Jellore, and Meryla) are already protected as informal reserves (Forest Management Zones 2 and 3). These areas are already included in NSW's Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative Reserve System as Informal Reserves. The only two with substantial areas that are not already protected are Mount Lindesay (around 3,600ha unprotected) and Belanglo (around 500ha unprotected).

With 5,600ha Mount Lindesay is the largest of the "Koala Reserves", with some 3,600 ha currently unprotected in informal reserves. Note that the area of this proposed reserve is shown as 6,195ha by OEH though the Forestry Corporation's rough mapping has included part of the existing Mount Clunie NP and does not accurately follow cadastre boundaries. This is comprised of sections of Mount Lindesay, Donaldson and Unumgar State Forests. Though what the Government doesn't say is that the decision has already been made that these forests are "*impractical to manage for commercial purposes*" because half the unprotected forests are already affected by logging dieback.

The Natural Resources Commission (2016 p54) '*Advice on Coastal Integrated Forestry Operations Approval remake*' identifies

A substantial portion of Urbenville Management Area in Supply Zone 1 is excluded from harvesting through this analysis. Five of the state forests in this area were considered impractical to manage for commercial purposes given reductions in net harvest area and areas affected by Bell Miner Associated Dieback.

The NRC identifies the area as comprised of Donaldson, Mount Lindsay, Unumgar, Bald Knob and Woodenbong State Forests. Some 2.300ha (56%) of the eucalypt forest in the proposed Koala Reserve has been identified as affected by dieback. The Forestry Corporation's clear intent is to hand these degraded forests over to the NPWS to rehabilitate at taxpayers expense. Though as there is no financial allocation to manage the new reserves this may have to come out of NPWS's existing budget.

For north-east NSW only 3 of these "new" reserves have high quality Koala habitat within them according to the Government's latest modelling criteria adopted for the IFOA (intersection of high quality habitat and high likelihood modelling): Mount Lindesay 244ha, Oaks 37ha and Mount Boss 273ha. Mount Lindesay has 49 Koala records (20 in areas now affected by BMAD and 18 since 2008), Oaks has one Koala record (2006) and Mount Boss has two (1995, 1994). The few old records for Oaks and Mount Boss do not substantiate the modelling.

In addition to this there are 6 Koala records (1974, 1998(2) and 2004(3)) in Olney, 3 in the Watagans (2002-5), and 1 record (1985) in Corrabare. Note that the area of Corrabare is given as 8,432 ha in the OEH spreadsheet, though the mapped area is only 843ha, indicating that OEH have made a transcription error.

In southern NSW there has been no Koala habitat modelling. The proposed Meryla SF Reserve has no Koala records, Jellore SF has 3 records (1995, 1997, 2001), and Belanglo has 68 records in Bionet. The Belanglo records have one from 2014 and the others from 2015, all but 4 of the records are from radio-tracking 2 individuals (Xena and Whiskey). It is surprising that large part of the habitat utilised by Xena and Whiskey is excluded from the reserve despite being within the State Forest in a protected FMZ informal reserve.

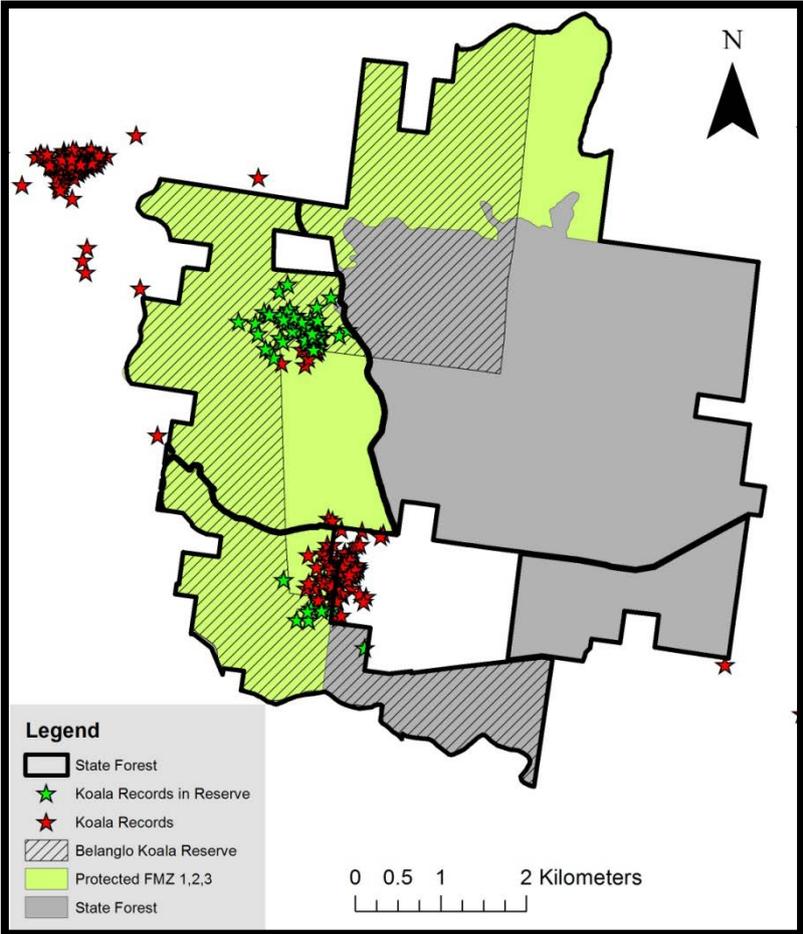
The new IFOA only applies prescriptions based on **contemporary Koala records** being "a record of a Koala detected in the previous 10 years", meaning that only two of the proposed Koala reserves have contemporary Koala records that would warrant consideration on State Forests.

Koala "Reserves"	Area we Digitized (ha)	Area OEH (ha)	Proposed Tenure	Already Protected in Informal Reserve (FMZ 1, 2, 3A, 3B)		Koala_highest quality habitat		Koala records	Hunting Allowed
				ha	%	ha	%		
Barrington Tops	156	155	Flora Reserve	149	96	0	0	0	Yes
Carrai	2111	2103	National Park	2102	100	0	0	0	No
Comleroy	2911	2905	Flora Reserve	2909	100	0	0	0	Yes
Corrabare	843	843	Flora Reserve	841	100	0	0	1	Yes
Mount Lindesay	5596	6195	Flora Reserve	1988	36	244	4	49	No
Mount Boss	1381	1383	SCA	1381	100	273	20	2	No
Oakes	593	593	National Park	592	100	37	6	1	No
Watagan	504	3107	Flora Reserve	499	99	0	0	3	Yes
Olney	2616		Flora Reserve	2589	99	0	0	6	Yes
Jellore SF	1415	1415	Flora Reserve	1415	100	NA	NA	3	Yes
Belanglo SF	1805	1818	Flora Reserve	1253	69	NA	NA	68*	Yes
Meryla SF	4084	4084	Flora Reserve	4084	100	NA	NA	0	Yes
TOTALS	24015	24601		19802	82	554	2	133	

NOTE That the areas given are from manually digitising maps which resulted in some minor deviations from OEH's claimed areas, except for Mt Lindesay and Corrabare: OEH give the area of Corrabare as 8,432ha which is apparently a transcription error with 843 ha used here, and the Mt. Lindesay area has been badly mapped which appears to be a FC error. Also OEH combine Watagan and Olney in their data, which have been separated here.

* Nearly all of the Koala records in Belanglo come from radio-tracking 2 individuals.

Belanglo Koala Reserve



Note that the proposed reserve boundary appears arbitrary and excludes most of the home range of the female Xena (southern cluster, which also extends onto private land) and some of the home range of the male Whiskey (northern cluster).