

The Hon. Penny Sharpe MLC
Minister for the Environment
Parliament House
Sydney
October 20th 2023

Dear Minister Sharpe,

The Sydney Knitting Nannas are writing to request that your government cease all the native forest logging operations being carried out by the Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW). From following the last parliament we know that you are aware of the urgency for significant actions if koalas and other endangered species are to be protected from extinction. However, this is not what we are witnessing.

The value of forests

- 1) Forests are worth much more standing than logged. They preserve biodiversity (including, but not restricted to, our iconic animals), ensure carbon sequestration, protect water and are a source of tourism income.
- 2) The operations of FCNSW are subsidised by NSW taxpayers' money. The Nannas don't want to see our money being wasted on logging forests.
- 3) Intact forests are much less likely to burn than forests which have been previously logged. (*1)
- 4) The NSW Audit Office has reported that FCNSW is failing to supervise its contractors over non-compliant practices. Citizen science groups in many different areas across the state report the same thing. The Nannas are appalled that a government agency should fail to comply with its own regulations. (*2)

All the above facts apply to the forests within the boundaries of the proposed Great Koala National Park (GKNP), with extra consequences for koala survival. **We therefore request that your government fast-track the declaration of the Park, not delay it until 2025. In the meantime, we request that logging operations be immediately halted in all areas designated as part of the proposed Park.**

As part of the wave of community support, we were hopeful that this year's election result and your appointment as Minister would mean that the devastation of native forests would be halted and that timely actions would be taken to protect koalas from extinction. We believe that the voters of NSW, when promised the GKNP, would never have expected bulldozers inside its borders after a Labor win. For us this amounts to a broken election promise, and we feel a sense of betrayal.

Increased logging within the footprint of the GKNP

In the past year, the state-owned Forestry Corporation of NSW has increased its logging almost fourfold within the footprint of the GKNP over 2021-2022 levels (*3). We are concerned that they are being allowed to proceed rapidly in order to log areas of native forest that will not be available to them once the GKNP is proclaimed.

'Koala Hubs' a PR exercise

The recent announcement of logging bans in 106 'Koala Hubs' will do nothing to save this Endangered species. We believe that the announcement was nothing more than a PR exercise, as it applies to only 5% of the area of the GKNP. In fact, one of the originators of the GKNP, Ashley Love, claims that because half of those hubs have already been intensively logged, the protection

measure will apply to a little over 1%. He also points out that koala distribution has substantially changed since the hubs were mapped in 2016 or earlier. (*4)

Destructive and unsustainable forestry practices

In a recent fact-finding mission in the Coffs Harbour region, Sydney Nannas saw appalling examples of clear felling in Newry State Forest. We were shocked to learn about the destructive and wasteful practices employed by FCNSW. Massive harvesting machines strip out all the trees except a very few, piling up “waste” (about 60% of the tree) which is then burnt and the area sprayed with herbicide. The forest doesn’t regenerate into anything resembling its former state. To treat in this way the forest supposed to become the GKNP is nothing short of vandalism. Visiting international scientists have been similarly shocked at FCNSW practices. (*2)

Logging in Pine Creek SF must not go ahead

During our mission, Nannas visited Pine Creek State Forest. FCNSW has announced their intention to log compartment 14 of this forest within days. It is a forest designated as a plantation yet almost indistinguishable from the Bongil Bongil National Park on the other side of the track. As far as we know, it is not a designated ‘koala hub’, but citizen scientists found over 100 fresh koala scats in the area the week after we were there. It has regenerated to become good koala habitat because in the past it was selectively logged, not clear felled as will be its dreadful fate unless you act today to stop this logging taking place.

The Forest Bridge

Pine Creek is part of a key concept of the GKNP – the ‘Forest Bridge’. This is a continuous forest corridor linking the coast to the upper escarpment. Clear felling in Pine Creek threatens the whole concept of the Park, as it will place great swathes of wasteland across wildlife movement routes and could even cut the bridge entirely.

The ‘Forest Wars’

As well as by the environmental devastation, the Nannas are saddened by the unnecessary conflict occurring in NSW native forests. Arrests of activists, including Nannas and First Nations Elders practising Ceremony to protect their ancestral lands are very disturbing. So is FCNSW, supported by NSW Police, locking out environmentalists and denying them access to gather vital forest data. These actions are the direct result of policy failure and reflect very poorly on the NSW government. This government will eventually be forced into the same position as Victoria and WA and will have to declare a halt to native forest logging. In the meantime, the expense is very great in the courts and the toll is very heavy on the citizen scientists who put their lives on hold to do the monitoring work which government agencies should be doing. The Knitting Nannas request that your government not engage in this drawn-out exercise any longer and declare a ban on native forest logging immediately.

Based on the above information, the Nannas have several questions to put to you.

1. Will you act to stop the destruction of Pine Creek (and whatever other forests are at imminent risk)?
2. Are you able to direct us to public information about the location of clear maps of the koala hubs?
3. What is the timeframe for the establishment of the GKNP?

Yours sincerely,
Bronwyn Vost

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Hurlstone Park NSW 2193
On behalf of Sydney Knitting Nannas & Friends

(*1) <https://www.anu.edu.au/news/all-news/logging-amplified-severity-of-black-summer-bushfires#:~:text=According%20to%20Professor%20Lindenmayer%2C%20logged,severity%20fire%2C%22%20he%20said.>

(*2) [Report highlights: Regulation of public native forestry | Audit Office of New South Wales \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)

(*3) <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/minds-were-blown-these-scientists-were-stunned-at-what-s-happening-on-the-nsw-north-coast-20230831-p5e11w.html>

(*4) <https://www.newsofthearea.com.au/opinion-please-save-us-from-extending-the-phoney-koala-wars>