

COUT13/00094

29 JAN 2013

Ms Sophie Dunstone  
Committee Secretary  
Senate Environment and Communication References Committee  
PO Box 6100  
PARLIAMENT HOUSE ACT 2600

Dear Ms Dunstone

Thank you for your letter of 10 January 2013 in which you offer the Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) the opportunity to respond to a comment in a submission received from the North East Forest Alliance (NEFA).

It appears that NEFA is alleging that pre-harvesting surveys to identify Koala High Use Areas are not being conducted and that therefore logging in those areas is illegal.

FCNSW diligently applies the conditions of its Threatened Species Licences, as required to be applied to koalas, in each logging area. It is not correct for NEFA to say that required searches for koalas are rarely undertaken or that "koala high use areas" (which are an artefact of the search and protection conditions) are illegally or knowingly logged.

FCNSW does not believe that protection of koalas in logging operations is *dependent* upon undertaking searches for koalas or evidence of their presence (scats) ahead of logging. Evidence suggests that it is very important to retain both a mosaic of undisturbed habitat across the landscape and a proportion of preferred feed species trees. This is exactly what is done in NSW State Forests and adjoining protected areas under joint agency koala protection strategies and management plans. Indeed this is equally or more important than surveying to identify patches of trees in which koalas may have been feeding at some time before logging is conducted but in which koalas may or may not still be present.

The Committee has indicated it will publish this letter alongside NEFA's submission, so I would like to refer readers to the oral testimony given by officers of FCNSW and the supplementary written information provided by FCNSW and the Office of Environment and Heritage (the regulator) during the Committee's 2011 inquiry into threats to koala habitat. I note that this information is publicly available on the Committee's section of the Parliamentary website, together with the report of the Committee's inquiry.

In conclusion, I believe a fair-minded assessment will confirm that the protection of the koala is taken very seriously in NSW, and native forest harvesting, as practised by FCNSW, poses no threat to the persistence of the koala.

Yours sincerely

  
Nick Roberts  
Acting Chief Executive  
Forestry Corporation of NSW