

Dear Minister Upton,

Back in 1999, residents in the Murrumbidgee River catchment, in the Eden region, received Federal funding in support of efforts to maintain and improve the local environment for koalas.

Part of this funding aimed to trial biodiversity reconstruction and an area including private and public land was fenced, so locally extinct critical weight range marsupials could be released, with a modicum of protection from foxes and cats,. The rationale for the project was derived from the National Forest Policy Statement (NFPS) and the probability that the loss of these species has led to a reduction in soil fertility, identified in comprehensive soils analysis.

It was around this time that I nominated what is now acknowledged as the last endemic koalas on the far south coast, as an endangered population and now senior threatened species officer Chris Allen was employed as koala recovery officer. Since his employment Mr Allen has never responded to any of my correspondence.

At the time the public land was managed for timber production and while State Forests initially supported the project, an outcome of the NSW Scientific committees' determination (2006) was its finding that extensive canopy dieback is a major threat to koalas. I understand since that time the Forestry Corporation has developed a theory regarding extensive canopy dieback, that isn't consistent with the NFPS.

Last year your Government declared forests in and around the fenced area as flora reserves.

Consequently, I briefly attended an OE&H koala information session, recently held at Bega and was advised to contact senior threatened species officer Rod Pietsch.

While Mr Pietsch did respond to my first information request, advising I contact the OE&H licencing section. I have yet to receive a response to my second request, sent on 23 March and reprinted below. Hence I am writing to invite the Minister to please provide contact details for the relevant departments or persons in the NPWS that could provide a letter of endorsement and those responsible for implementing the catchment recommendations.

Yours Sincerely

Hello Rod,

I've received a response from the licencing section, indicating a scientific licence and a research licence are required for biodiversity reconstruction.

With regard to the scientific licence, the translocation guidelines indicate " . . The proponent must attach letters of endorsement from all stakeholders and partner organisations, including the landholders and land managers of the source and host environments and the recovery team (if no draft or endorsed recovery plan)."

With regard to biodiversity reconstruction the guidelines indicate " . . . The NPWS will encourage proponents of TPs to include scientific research as part of translocation programs which are justified under the above programs."

You may be aware that Bega Shire Council has released its management plans for Cuttagee, Middle and Nelsons catchments. The Middle lake plan, reference pasted below fyi, recommends, as a high priority, collaborative research into the causes of land degradation on forested land and actions to address it.

Could you please provide contact details for the relevant departments or persons in the NPWS, that could provide a letter of endorsement and those responsible for implementing the catchment recommendations. Thank you

" . . Example of an active head-cut on a minor stream in a forested setting which has formed a deep incised gully approximately 400m long. Natural erosion process that shows examples of undercutting, lateral bank erosion and slumping due to highly erodible, sodic soils in the Sandy Creek sub-catchment. Difficult to treat due to scale of problem. Recommended actions include a collaborative research project for university to study what may have been the initial cause/s (i.e. historical logging practices) and what potential actions could be undertaken to halt or slow down process. Monitor head-cut progression as freshwater wetland and nearby management track under direct threat as the head-cut migrates further upstream.