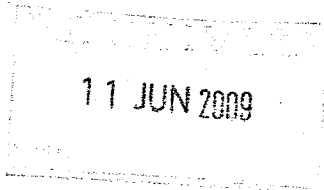


MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES
MINISTER FOR ENERGY
MINISTER FOR MINERAL RESOURCES
MINISTER FOR STATE DEVELOPMENT



NEW SOUTH WALES

MPI09/1600



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The Hon Mike Kelly MP
Federal Member for Eden Monaro
PO Box 214
QUEANBEYAN NSW 2620

5 JUN 2009

Dear Dr Kelly

I refer to your representation dated 28 March 2009 on behalf of Mr Robert Bertram, PO Box 161, Bermagui 2546 concerning the Eden Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) and a range of forest management issues in southern NSW.

In his letter Mr Bertram asks whether the State and Federal Governments are in dispute over compliance issues related to the Integrated Forestry Operations Approval (IFOA) for the Eden region and about the management of koalas. It is my understanding that there are no areas of dispute between the Federal and NSW Governments in relation to the Eden RFA. Issues associated with the IFOA under any RFA are managed and regulated by State agencies.

Similarly, issues of koala protection in south coast forests are matters that lie within the responsibility of the State and should be raised with the appropriate State authorities. Forests NSW has advised that information placed before the NSW Scientific Committee indicated there has not been a decline in regional koala populations in recent decades. It should also be noted that a local conservation group strongly supported koalas being listed as an endangered population in the local area in response to a nomination under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*. The nomination was dismissed by the NSW Scientific Committee in 2007.

Management of koalas is the subject of ongoing research and review, with local communities closely involved in those processes. Forests NSW is working closely with the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) on the Far South Coast Koala Management Framework including liaison on survey techniques on state forest. Forests NSW is exceeding its legal requirements under the IFOA on koala survey techniques and frequency. DECC will consider the survey data and make recommendations to Government regarding any necessary changes to the koala management prescriptions contained within the Integrated Forestry Operations Approval.

In relation to dieback, I am informed that locally it is attributed to either the current drought conditions or an over-abundance of psyllids and bell miners, all of which are evident in the area across all land tenures. Vegetation dieback attributed to psyllids and bell miners has recently been listed as a threatening process across NSW under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*.

I am also aware that vegetation dieback as a result of both soil based and environmental factors seems to be evident across the broader landscape and is not specifically a local issue. Forests NSW advises that in the Eden area it is particularly associated with private property and national park at the interface of forest and agricultural land. It also occurs in healthy forests as a response to drought, with trees recovering after rain. It is also likely that a lack of low intensity fire induces secondary changes such as increased acidity and aluminium availability that are considered to be harmful to the roots of established trees.


Forests NSW and the Department of Environment and Climate Change are joint sponsors of the Bell Miner Associated Dieback (BMAD) Working Group that is working in a collaborative and coordinated way to address this forest health issue. Forests NSW has established several adaptive management trials under the auspices of the working group in an endeavour to develop a greater understanding of BMAD. The results of these trials will assist in bringing greater clarity and understanding on how to manage Bell-Miner Associated Dieback.

The area of Crown land available for forestry operations under the Regional Forest Agreements for both the Eden and the Southern Regions is publically available information and is within the respective Regional Forest Agreements. Access to these are available from the Department of Planning or via the following web sites: www.daff.gov.au ; or www.planning.nsw.gov.au .

For further advice on these matters, please contact Forests NSW Southern region manager, Mr Ian Barnes on 44751400.

I hope this information is of assistance to Mr Bertram.

Yours sincerely


IAN MACDONALD MLC