



Mark Speakman
Minister for the Environment

Niall Blair
Minister for Primary Industries

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW GOVERNMENT PROTECTS SOUTH COAST KOALAS AND LOCAL TIMBER INDUSTRY

Environment Minister Mark Speakman, Primary Industries Minister Niall Blair and Member for Bega Andrew Constance today announced the establishment of four new Flora Reserves on the NSW Far South Coast, which will provide protection to the last known local koala population.

To ensure the future viability of the local timber industry, the NSW Government will also provide a \$2.5 million grant to facilitate the sourcing of timber from alternative South East NSW State Forests and work with industry to manage a longer-term transition to high quality regrowth forests.

“Almost 12,000 hectares will be added to the NSW forest reserve system and managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, which will significantly boost habitat connectivity and management consistency throughout the South East coastal forests,” Mr Speakman said.

“Flora Reserves afford similar protections to National Parks and can only be revoked by an Act of Parliament. These reserves will support the last known far south coast koala population and 25 threatened species, including the long-nosed potoroo, the yellow-bellied glider and the powerful owl.

“The reserves are also significant to the local Aboriginal community. The NSW Government will work with the Aboriginal owners of the neighbouring Biamanga National Park to ensure they have a proper say in how these reserves are managed.”

Mr Blair said the \$2.5 million government grant would support the future of the local timber industry.

“Sustainable timber harvesting practices in NSW mean that the renewable timber resource in our state forests can be extracted responsibly while maintaining a healthy forest and habitat for koalas and other animals,” Mr Blair said.

“The unique nature of these forests means they will be managed for conservation as part of the state forest estate, utilising evidence-based and scientific landscape management principles and rigorous monitoring of outcomes.

“These forests contain some of the largest quantities of high-value timber on the Far South Coast – which was part of the renewable timber resource committed to industry – so it is appropriate that funding has been provided to source alternative timber.”

Member for Bega Andrew Constance welcomed the announcement, saying the government had achieved a win-win by protecting an important koala population and supporting the local timber industry, which directly employs 278 people in the Bega Valley.

“Costs associated with sourcing timber from further afield will be covered by the \$2.5 million grant to minimise the impact on supply agreements and timber industry jobs, especially in Eden,” Mr Constance said.