Tuesday, 12 September 2023

The NSW Government has announced the process to establish the Great Koala National Park, as well as a halt to timber harvesting operations in the 106 koala hubs within the area being assessed for the park.

The creation of the Great Koala National Park on the NSW Mid North Coast is Labor’s largest environmental commitment and a crucial part of the overall strategy to save koalas from extinction in NSW.

The Government’s action will balance our commitment to protecting environmentally sensitive areas with the development of a plan to sustain a viable timber industry and jobs.

While the work to establish the park is carried out, the Government will implement a halt to timber harvesting in koala hubs within the assessment area for the park. Operations were paused on Friday 1 September 2023, by agreement with Forestry Corporation of NSW.

The 106 koala hubs cover more than 8,400 hectares of state forest. Koala hubs are areas where there is strong evidence of multi-generational, high-density populations of the iconic animal. Koala hubs cover approximately 5% of the Great Koala National Park assessment area, but contain 42% of recorded koala sightings in state forests in the assessment area since 2000.

The Government will immediately discuss with Forestry Corporation of NSW the next steps of the cessation and determine timber supply options.

The process to establish the park will involve three key components:

- An independent economic and social assessment which will consider the impacts on local jobs and communities;

- The establishment of industry, community and Aboriginal advisory panels to provide input to the creation of the park; and,

- An expert environmental and cultural heritage assessment to safeguard the unique environmental and cultural heritage of the region and ensure the Great Koala National Park aligns with the highest standards of environmental protection and respect for cultural heritage.

Quotes attributable to the Minister for the Environment Penny Sharpe:

“The creation of the Great Koala National Park is essential to saving koalas from extinction in NSW.

“The Government is taking serious steps towards its creation and will work closely with the community, Aboriginal organisations and industry as the areas for inclusion in the park are assessed.”
Quotes attributable to the Minister for Agriculture and Regional NSW Tara Moriarty:

“The Great Koala National Park is a high priority and we are working hard across Government to establish this significant undertaking.

“The Government commits to working closely with the industry to develop a blueprint for the future timber sector that accommodates both the park and the production of timber products.”

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