

8 January 2017

Government and plantation industry formalise koala procedures

The plantation industry of Victoria has welcomed the Victorian government's announcement that it is formalising the existing procedures developed by the plantation industry to ensure best practice environmental management – including maximising the protection of the iconic koala.

The arrival of koalas in blue gum plantations in Victoria is a relatively recent phenomenon. Ever since the marsupials began to be found in the straight rows of blue gums, industry has been proactive in working with koala carers and other stakeholders to design and deliver procedures to reduce the impacts of operations on the koalas.

Industry, Government and other stakeholders have been working together to legally formalise these procedures for some time.

Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Forest Products Association Mr Ross Hampton said, "Koalas in south western Victoria have spread from their traditional homes in native forest to the blue gum plantation crops now growing in the area."

"Two decades ago, these plantations were established on cleared land where there were no koalas, using best practice guidelines which promoted retention of existing remnant areas of native vegetation. These eucalypt plantations now provide new habitat for native animals including koalas."

"Amongst other protection practices, the industry uses independent professional koala spotters who walk ahead of the harvesting operations to identify trees which contain koalas. Once a koala is discovered, the tree is marked, as well as surrounding trees, and then that koala is monitored to ensure it is not harmed. New advances in technology to assist in spotting koalas are also being investigated, such as the use of drones."

Background

There are 168,000 hectares of plantations in the 'Green Triangle' area which covers the south west of Victoria and south East of South Australia. 122,00 hectares are on the Victorian side. More than 8,500 people are directly employed in the region servicing plantations and approximately another 15,000 supported indirectly. Plantations added \$778 million to the Victorian economy in 2016.

AFPA represents forest growers, harvesters, and manufacturers of timber and paper products.

Media Contact: Bernadette Cording
AFPA Communications Manager
(m) 0409 962 250 (e) Bernadette.cording@ausfpa.com.au