

Green Triangle Regional Plantation Committee Inc.

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Koala Management Policy for Plantation Harvest Operations (September 2013)

Policy Development

This Policy has been coordinated through the Green Triangle Regional Plantation Committee (GT RPC) and has involved collaborative input from industry representatives; Department Environment and Primary Industries (Vic); Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (SA); Mosswood wildlife rehabilitators (Vic); and Hinton Rd Wildlife Carer (SA).

Preamble

Tasmanian blue gum plantations (*Eucalyptus globulus*) were initially established in the Green Triangle by small scale growers however by the mid 1990's several large Managed Investment Scheme (MIS) companies began broad scale plantings on cleared agricultural land. This land was mostly used for raising sheep and cattle and generally contained little to no native habitat. Strong investor support resulted in the establishment of up to 30,000 hectares per annum. In the years between 2000 and 2004 almost 100,000 hectares of bare land was planted to blue gum culminating in the establishment of a large scale hardwood estate of around 180,000 hectares.

The scale and range of the blue gum estate especially in Western Victoria meant some land bordered known Koala habitat. It was not common for Koalas to frequent blue gum plantations as the juvenile trees were small offering little protection from predators. The industry also believed blue gum leaves were not a favoured food source.

As the estate matured harvest began slowly in 2006 and continued to grow steadily to around 1.5m gmt's in 2013. Over the last few years encounters with Koalas has increased particularly in the Western Victorian plantation estate. As a result plantation owners/managers and harvest contractors sought to undertake their own means of managing Koalas each with varying degrees of success. To this end the Green Triangle Regional Plantation Committee (RPC) has seen fit to develop its own Policy and Guidelines in managing Koalas. GTRPC members will be encouraged to adopt and work to the Policy and Guidelines as a minimum industry standard.

Policy Objective

This policy is to provide for koala management in plantations to ensure koala welfare is maintained and the risk of koala injury from forestry operations is minimised.

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Policy Framework

The framework to achieve this policy objective includes:

- developing stakeholder agreed guidelines for management of koalas in plantations while operations take place. The guidelines will incorporate:
 - planning for operations considering: populations, neighbouring habitat and sequence of harvesting.
 - operational controls - a range of tools that could be implemented to manage koalas during and after harvesting operations which aim to uphold the policy objective.
 - koala welfare, incident management and reporting requirements.
 - training to ensure all those who interact with koalas are well versed in latest practice.
- further development of training programs dealing with: guidelines, reporting, koala behaviour, handling techniques, incident management and other measures to support this policy.
- adopting a continual improvement approach through supporting new research; amending the policy and guidelines accordingly.
- encouraging an ongoing working relationship with industry and interested stakeholders, sharing information to further understand regionalised koala habitat and facilitating meetings through the GTRPC.
- encouraging members to adopt this Policy which would signify the adoption of best practice guidelines into their own policies and procedures.
- GTRPC reviewing this policy on a needs basis.

Associated Documents

- Koala Management Guidelines for Plantation Harvest Operations (GT RPC 2013)