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Phone tap reveals bugs in plan to save koalas

 JENNIE CURTIN
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THE former fashion designer Prue Acton, who is campaigning to save a koala colony from logging in a south-east forest, has discovered a bugging device in her phone.

The MP3 recorder was found by chance three weeks ago when Ms Acton, pictured, and her partner, the artist Merv Moriarty, received a delivery of water on their property at Wallagoot near Bega.

When the truck arrived, it ran over the Telstra pit on the track leading to their home.

The couple noticed their email had stopped working so Mr Moriarty went to check the pit. "He and the tanker driver pulled off the broken top and saw some strange devices attach to the phone lines but didn't realise they were listening devices," Ms Acton said.

Telstra fixed the line hours later, but the next day a detective from Bega police arrived.

"She came out to ask us first whether either of us were having an affair and bugging the phone. Hilarious! She next said a recording device, not a broadcasting device, had been found on the line."

The device was sent to Sydney for forensic examination, but Ms Acton said that because she had not been threatened directly, police were not giving the matter high priority.

She had no idea who might have installed the bug, but said it would not stop her from battling Forests NSW over logging in the Mumbulla and Murrumbidgee state forests near Bermagui.

"This whole experience cannot be trivialised or overlooked, Ms Acton said.

"It has been very unsettling, yet I'm not going to be deterred from letting people know what is about to happen in the forests down here.

"The loggers are about to move into these forests and destroy the last remaining koala habitat in NSW while the Premier, Kristina Keneally, does nothing."

A NSW Police media spokesman confirmed that a device had been found and sent to the technical division for examination.

Forests NSW has said it plans to start logging in an area west of the koala colony to minimise the chance of encountering the animals.

Conservationists plan to continue their objections and are calling for a review of the regional forestry agreements.

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