

6th February, 2015



Australian Bluegum Plantations' Koala Protection Response

Australian Bluegum Plantations (ABP) can confirm that koalas identified in a video taken at the Bessiebelle plantation on 28 January 2015, are safe, ABP Managing Director, Tony Price said.

Following an incident in which koalas were filmed in proximity to an active harvest operation, ABP personnel responded according to its Koala Protection and Management Plan. This plan is a certified approach we adopted over 12 months ago to ensure we take every possible step to keep our local animal population safe.

This plan includes deploying dedicated personnel to identify and mark trees which contain koalas prior to any harvesting activity. These personnel are known as “spotters” and work alongside ABP’s harvesting crews to ensure the welfare of koalas during harvesting. ABP has been utilising such spotters for over 12 months during harvesting operations. While we believe this initiative has been very successful in minimising the impact of our operations on koala welfare, we are operating in a natural environment and occasionally an incident occurs despite our best efforts.

Following the report of the incident last Wednesday, ABP undertook the following steps:

- A senior ABP officer attended the site to commence an investigation of reported endangerment to koalas within half an hour of being notified of the incident.
- Harvesting operations were suspended at the site for a number of reasons and will remain so pending the outcome of the current investigation.
- The senior officer notified local wildlife carers and the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) of the incident.
- The officer identified animals fitting the description alive in a nearby tree. The officer returned to the site the following morning and again spotted the animals feeding in a tree. A wildlife carer and DEPI officer have also observed the animal.
- The officer also confirmed that two koala spotters were working onsite at the time of the incident, marking trees where animals were seen.
- ABP will shortly conclude its investigation and implement any appropriate corrective actions.
- While the investigation is ongoing, initial indications are that the koalas moved from a marked to an unmarked tree in the 15 minutes between when spotters reviewed the trees and the trees were harvested.

All investigative and corrective processes implemented in response to this incident are consistent with ABP’s commitments under its Forest Stewardship Council certification. ABP’s performance relative to the FSC standards is regularly monitored by ABP personnel and independently verified by third-party auditor, Rainforest Alliance.

ABP strives to protect native wildlife in balance with the environmental, economic and social benefits of plantation forestry.

ABP is continuing to work with all stakeholders including government, wildlife carers, land owners, the industry and local communities to develop a longer term solution to the shared issue of managing koala populations in the area.

For full details of ABP's Koala Protection and Management Plan please see the ABP website <http://www.austgum.com.au>