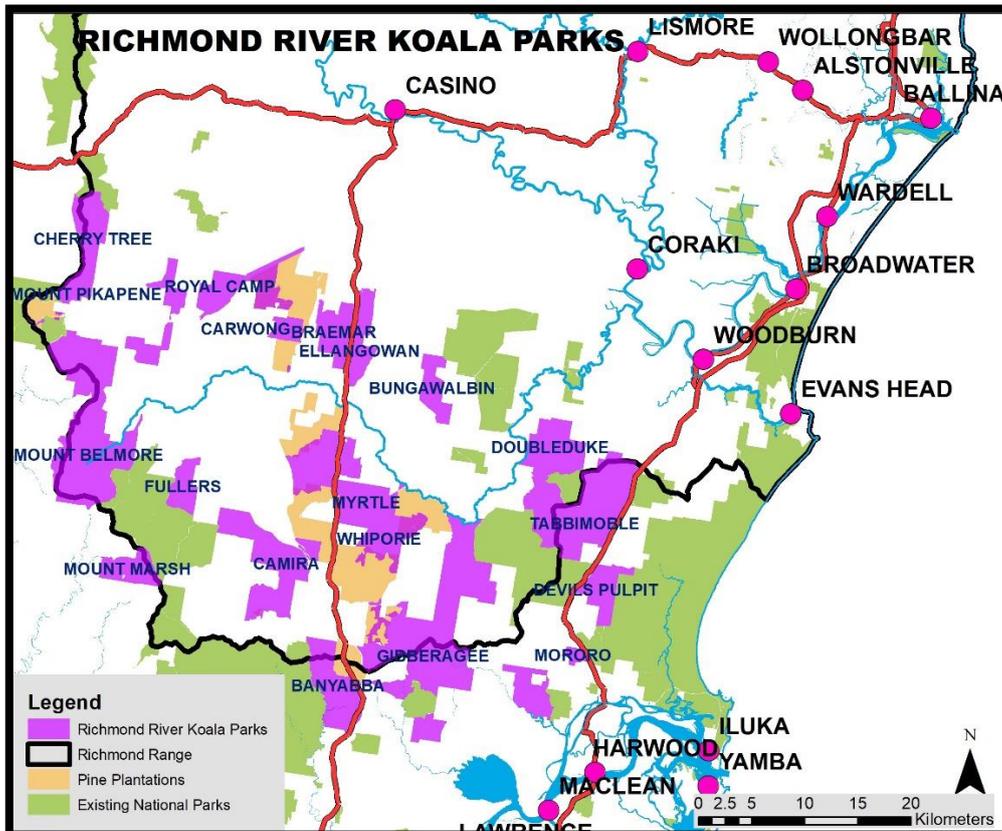


Richmond River Koala Parks

It is proposed that 56,200 ha of State Forests in the southern catchment of the Richmond River valley and along the southern Richmond Range be created as the Richmond River Koala Parks.



56,000 ha of State Forests (purple, named) are proposed to be added to 79,000 ha of existing National Parks (green) to create the Richmond River Koala Parks.

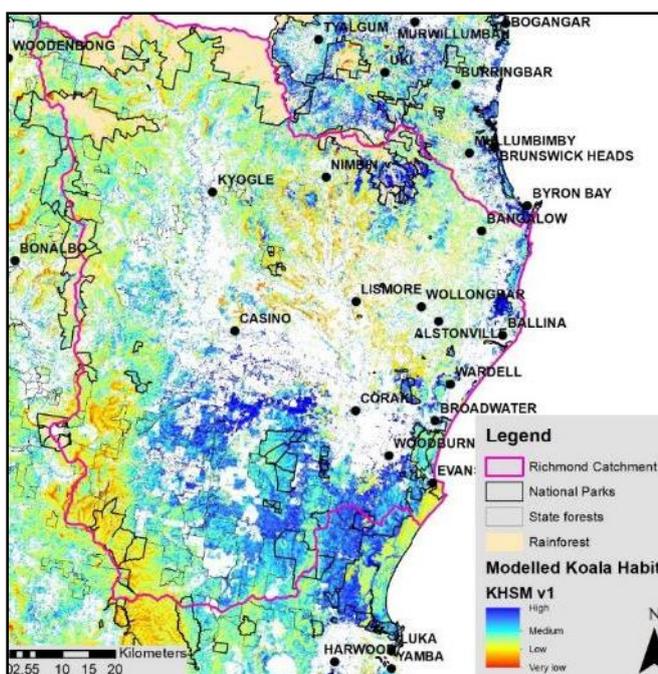
It is recommended that the southern Richmond State Forests be added to the reserve system due to:

- being part of the Banyabba Area of Regional Koala Significance, a genetically distinct population from the Great Koala National Park, and the largest area of high quality Koala habitat with potential for long-term viability in the Richmond catchment
- encompassing 28,000ha of Nationally Important Koala Areas, identified as a Commonwealth priority for reservation
- providing potential habitat for 132 Threatened Species (4 Critically Endangered, 39 Endangered and 89 Vulnerable), along with an Endangered Population
- the need to protect riparian vegetation, floodplains and catchments to help restore the health of the Richmond River by improving the quantity and quality of water inflows, increasing flows in dry periods and reducing flooding peaks.
- supporting a high diversity of plants and animals including; many reaching or approaching their northern, southern or eastern distributional limits, a significant woodland outlier, a suite of plants endemic to the Clarence-Moreton Basin or with disjunct populations in the Sydney basin, migratory and nomadic nectivores, and a refuge for species declining elsewhere
- providing tree-hollows essential as dens and nests for a multitude of species, of which 22 species are threatened with extinction, of particular significance are Barking Owl, Brush-tailed Phascogale, Squirrel Glider and Yellow-bellied Glider.
- providing critical winter nectar resources for a multitude of migratory, nomadic and resident nectivores, including the Critically Endangered Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater

- encompassing parts of the largest area of intact wetlands, woodlands and forests left on the extensively cleared Richmond floodplain, mostly now listed as Endangered Ecological Communities
- linking existing National Parks and fragmented animal populations into one continuous protected sanctuary
- encompassing 35,000ha of forest ecosystems that still fail to meet the 1998 targets for inclusion of 15% of their original extent in the national reserve system
- being within the NSW section of the nationally and internationally significant South-East Queensland Bioregion which has only 14% reserved, less than half the target of 30% reservation by 2030 that both State and Federal Governments have committed to
- contributing to viable populations of 41 threatened fauna which fail to achieve reserve targets set in 1998, with 14 species failing to achieve a quarter of their habitat targets, and another 18 less than half their habitat targets
- providing an altitudinal gradient from sea level to over 600m to accommodate shifts in species distributions in response to increasing temperatures, and being part of a nationally significant climate corridor along the Richmond Range from Bundjalung NP on the coast to the Border Ranges NP
- ability to immediately begin regaining in the order of 28 million tonnes of CO₂ released into the atmosphere through past logging, and capacity to remove some 359,000 tonnes of atmospheric CO₂ per annum and again store it in their wood and soils as forests recover and trees grow bigger.

The need for action to protect these forests is urgent due to:

- extensive impacts from past logging being amplified by 86% of the State Forests being burnt in the 2019/20 wildfires, and compounded by more logging
- the intent to log over 75% of the mature feed trees Koalas need to recover from the wildfires
- the intent to log most mature trees essential to retain as future hollow-bearing trees
- the need to restore the forest's integrity to better withstand the growing threats of droughts and bushfires
- the urgency of reducing atmospheric carbon



OEH Koala Habitat Suitability Model ranking of Koala habitat across the Richmond River catchment (dark blue is highest)

The principal motivation for this proposal is concern for the Banyabba Area of Regional Koala Significance (ARKS). The region was extensively burnt in the 2019/20 wildfires. The forests had dried out and were under stress from a record drought when the wildfires began in October 2019, eventually burning through 86% of southern Richmond State forests. Over half the Koalas are likely to have been killed in the fires, though populations are slowly recovering. Regrettably, the Forestry Corporation is targeting core populations for logging, removing most of their preferred feed trees. These forests and their inhabitants need time and care to recover from past logging and the fires, not more logging to compound the impacts.

For further information see:

<https://www.richmondriverkoalaparks.com/>