

ATTACHMENT 2 – Answers to Questions on Notice

Question on Notice p56

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Just to wind up on the habitat question—and take it on notice by all means—would it be fair to say that most of the koalas' best habitat is in the Crown land rather than in national parks?

Ms MATTHES: I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Sure. Most of the national park is now in the Great Dividing Range. But anyway, take that on notice.

This is not a simple question to even answer on notice in the time available, ie it requires a fair amount of research but will do my best to answer by identifying some of the complexities and variabilities. First, it is important to state that all koala habitat, currently occupied and unoccupied, is important to the future of NSW's koala populations, irrespective of land tenure. Unoccupied habitat may be important should populations expand, be used at certain times of year, be used for getting between patches, or even necessary following storms, when leaf is blown from trees.

I don't believe it is fair to say that "most of the koalas' best habitat is in the Crown land". Crown land does have good koala habitat that is important. Just like State Forests, National Parks, Council lands, and private land, Crown Land has many parcels that contain koala populations, and it must be looked at, at the landscape scale – they are all important. For example in the Tuckean Swamp area, koalas move between parcels of Crown land (flood reserve and Dungarubba Hall Reserve), national park (Tuckean Nature Reserve and Tucki Nature Reserve), Lismore and Ballina Council road reserves, and private property. All these parcels are important habitat for the local koalas. Similar examples, can be provided for many local government areas.

It should also be noted that during the IFOA process in the 1990's there was koala habitat that was included in State Forests that was subsequently transferred to the National Parks estate. A recent study has shown that despite being suitable koala habitat the area of Mebbin National Park that was transferred from State Forests, it is not being occupied by the koalas like the adjacent national park, which has significantly higher rates of koala occupancy. Nonetheless it is important for the koalas to provide a safe passage to other more suitable habitat, and one day when trees are older and if habitat is managed for koalas, then it is expected that these areas will also highly occupied.

I am also assuming that the Hon. Catherine Cusack's last comment regarding Great Dividing Range, was referring to the Great Eastern Ranges. While there is a large amount of koala habitat covered by the Great Eastern Ranges project, it is just that, a project. It covers all land tenures within the designated area. Other than national parks, nature reserves, flora reserves, and land under permanent conservation agreements, does provide any formal protection for koala habitat across the landscape. That is, it is very patchy.

Question on Notice p57

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Have all the north coast councils you mentioned adopted a koala plan of management?

Ms MATTHES: They all have a koala plan of management that has been to the Minister. Ballina's is still with the Minister. It has gone through its final process with council and is with the Minister. Lismore's has been adopted.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I am happy for you to give us that answer on notice.

Ms MATTHES: I will take that on notice.

Tweed Shire Council has prepared a Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (CKPOM), which has been approved as a Strategy by Council. It was not forwarded to the Department of Planning and Environment as the Council were happy with the plan and did not want it watered down. Tweed's CKPOM is not for the entire Shire, but for the coastal koala population.

Byron Shire Council has prepared a Draft Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management. It was not approved by Council at the time of the Parliamentary Inquiry, however, it has subsequently been approved by Council and requires a few amendments before being sent to the Minister for Planning for consideration. Byron's CKPOM is also only for part of the Shire.

Ballina Shire Council has prepared a Draft Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management, which has been through a number of consultation processes, at both the Council and State levels. Ballina's CKPOM has had amendments made and a final draft has been sent to the Minister for Planning for approval (hopefully). Ballina's CKPOM is for the entire Shire.

Lismore City Council has prepared a Draft Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management, which has been through a number of consultation processes, at both the Council and State levels. Lismore's CKPOM has had amendments made and a final draft has been approved by the Minister for Planning. Lismore's CKPOM is not for the entire City, but for the south-east.

ATTACHMENT 4 – Clarification of Certain Issues

1) Clarification p54

I would like to clarify the comment that I made from transcript pg 54 *“If we get another one, it will go up to Currumbin or Australia Zoo to be euthanized because we do not have the resources or physical space for people to care for them.”* If this could be deleted and the following text inserted it would be much appreciated.

“ When a koala comes in to the Care Centre it is taken to the vet, who decides on whether to euthanize the koala or implement a treatment plan. In some cases, the decision between the koalas welfare and being rehabilitatable is marginal. Often if the Care Centre in Lismore, Currumbin Wildlife Hospital or Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital have capacity, these marginally rehabilitatable koalas will be given a chance. Sometimes it is successful and sometimes it isn’t. The level of resources can be a factor in the decision-making on whether to euthanize these marginal animals. The Care Centre and Hospitals were at full capacity in July due to the unprecedented number of koalas taken in across NSW and Qld. If another marginal koala were taken in, it will go up to Currumbin or Australia Zoo and may be euthanized because we do not have the resources or physical space for people to care for them.”

2) Clarification p54

The Hon. Catherine Cusack asked *“What happened?”* and *“Were they road accidents?”* I didn’t really answer those questions and would like to provide an answer. If the following text could be inserted it would be much appreciated. Note that August has also been extremely busy at Care Centre.

“We are not certain what is happening. We are thinking that the warmer winter overall has resulted in an early breeding season, or continued breeding season throughout winter. This appears to have resulted in more koalas moving, and not getting a chance to rebuild energy stores used during the breeding season and needed for the next breeding season, and possibly increased cortisol levels, which increase during breeding and the associated stress. “

“The koalas moving more left them more vulnerable to vehicle strike and dog attack, so there were quite a few road accidents. The lack of energy reserves and possibly higher cortisol levels, may have increased the prevalence or onset of Chlamydia. In addition, the winter weather this year may have played a part. A cold snap saw some old koalas and those with a predisposed illness come into the Care Centre, and there may have been a delayed effect of storms earlier in January and again in June this year. Overall not a good year for the koalas”

“Another factor in the number of koalas being taken to the Care Centre could be a result of increased community awareness.”

Clarification p55

3) 2nd and last points of speech at bottom of p55, I was cut off. I said “Each koala has its own-“ I was going to say “home range”.

In relation to the Hon. Catherine Cusack's following question regarding the programming of koalas when young, I would like to add to my response after "*It is programmed in.*" "to a degree."

Clarification p56

- 4) The Hon. Catherine Cusack asked "*But they do not move.*" I didn't really answer this question and would appreciate if the following clarification could be added to the transcript.

"It will depend on the koala and each has its own level of submissiveness and determination. Obviously they will have to move if there is a road where their habitat was, and more so if it is fenced. Some will move, stressed but will move. If there is a favourite food tree on the other side of the road than they are on or was on the route of the road, then there is a good chance that koala will try to cross and get to its tree, one way or another.