

## **Portfolio Committee No. 7 – Planning and Environment Hearing in Port Macquarie Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> February: Inquiry into Koala populations and Habitat in New South Wales**

### **Additional information:**

#### **Introductory remarks**

My name is Frank Dennis. I have a BSc from Sydney University with majors in Zoology and Psychology. I have lived in Port Macquarie since 1975. I belong to three activist organisations; No Electricity from Forests, Mid North Coast Branch National Parks Association and Climate Change Australia -Hastings. I served on the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council for 8 years.

In my submission I referred to a forest emergency – a crisis exemplified by the rapid population decline in koalas, primarily through habitat loss caused by the destruction, degradation and fragmentation of the forests they depend on to survive.

The current RFA/IFOA system is broken and can't be fixed. It should be scrapped. It has failed to protect the environment. The huge quantities of small logs provided by this industrial scale logging seem destined to feed furnaces to generate electricity or other wood-based biofuels or biochemical products.

One of the biggest threats to vulnerable species such as the Koala and other endangered and threatened species, after habitat loss, is the present State government policies on land clearing, vegetation and species management, including the unscientific 'offsets' regime which sits at the heart of their legislation.

The bushfires consuming vast tracks of forest across Australia this year have changed everything. The scale and intensity of these unprecedented fires, over 5 million hectares of forests burnt to date in NSW alone, including Gondwanaland Rainforests never expected to burn.

We are facing a climate emergency. Anthropogenic global heating is a fact, is increasing at an alarming rate and it's having an impact on forests, Koalas and now every one of us into the future.

Given the present Federal Governments demonstrated inability to lead, State governments are in a unique position to influence the course of events to avert catastrophe – time is short – less than ten years to reduce the difference between emissions being emitted and the rate they can be drawn down from the atmosphere. The target most referenced is net zero by 2050: some say that level should be zero by 2050, much sooner if possible.

This enquiry clearly represents an opportunity for truth telling. We must face up to the new realities exposed by the intensive logging regimes and their failings and now the bushfires, with the impacts not yet fully understood or even known, and the imperatives of global heating.

My argument is simple – Stop logging and clearing koala habitat trees. That is the single most important reason Koalas are in such serious decline.

Saving trees can also save us, by taking CO2 from the atmosphere. They act as important carbon sinks.

I'll close with these final comments:

I know what must happen from here, you know what must happen.

It's your job now to design and implement solutions and strategies to ensure the future of the Koala. Their future and very likely ours, is in your hands. You must act without delay.

I have 6 recommendations to submit. I suggest saving time and I would like to submit them with a copy of my introductory remarks rather than read them now – I have 10 copies to hand out.

I thank you and your committee for your time today.



## Recommendations:

Declare a global heating emergency and plan responses, accordingly, making protection of the natural environment with ecologically sound, sustainable management principles front and centre to any policy implementation and actions.

### **“Climate Emergency: Emergencies require emergency responses”**

1. Moratorium to halt all logging in public native forests.
2. Survey/audit/review (with proper baselines) known sites and locations of koalas with immediate action to protect/reserve all known koala hubs and high conservation value forests areas, across all tenures, known to support/used by koalas core koala habit; similarly prioritise other high risk endangered and threatened species for assessment and protection of their habitat and restoration as required, based on similar surveys and status reviews.
3. Urgent revision of biodiversity, land and vegetation management laws, regulations and practices to implement evidence based regulatory regimes with adequate funding/resources, restoring public institutions to ensure protection of biodiversity, (with reference to EDO and peak environmental groups submissions on this)
4. Change classification of wood biomass as renewable energy source to non – renewable. # Stop promoting or supporting its use here or overseas and withdraw any subsidies. Promote policies supporting ‘proforestration’ \*
5. Contribute to development of ecologically based fire management practices linked to above point.
6. Develop an industry transition plan to provide employment and /or other assistance for displaced timber workers and assistance to others disrupted by the changes required. Employment can be created immediately helping to implement the emergency plan outlined above.

## Comments:

**\*Proforestration** means “growing existing forests intact to their ecological potential”, and is contrasted with **afforestation** (planting new forests) and **reforestation**( replacing forests on deforested or recently harvested lands) that take much longer to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in their early years than older forests do as they continue growing. **Proforestation** has the further advantage of not requiring any new land, nor does it have additional labour to plant trees. These older forests also provide multiple benefits including protecting biological diversity and purifying air and water. Ref. <https://www.gazettenet.com/Guest-column-by-William-R-Moomaw-Bob-Leverett-Robert-A-Jonas-and-Monica-Jakuc-Leverett-27110056>

#Wood based biomass is not the ‘carbon neutral’ energy source industry claims it to be; burning wood is worse than burning coal.

### **“Saving Forests is Climate Action!”**

## Submitted by:

**Frank Dennis**

**3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020**

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Resolved to publish Yes / No