



# Bellingen Environment Centre Inc

Dedicated to the conservation of the natural environment of the Bellinger Valley since 1990

ABN 12 164 311 446 • Shop 4/1 Church St Lane BELLINGEN • PO Box 461 PO BELLINGEN NSW 2454

Document tendered by  
**MR ASHLEY LOVE**  
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**ANDREW RATCHFORD**  
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## NSW Upper House Koala Inquiry hearing in Coffs Harbour 4 Feb 2020.

### Opening statement by Ashley Love for the Bellingen Environment Centre

Thankyou for the opportunity to appear before the Inquiry on behalf of the Bellingen Environment Centre .

The BEC made a detailed written submission to the Inquiry in response to the Terms of Reference and I am happy to take questions on the submission.

It is obvious though much has changed since the Inquiry was established and submissions closed and I would briefly like to identify a few more recent issues and offer to respond to questions on them. They include;

#### 1. Sound planning for the GKNP

Environment groups had a heady budget of \$3K and very good cooperation from then OEH to undertake the assessment leading to the GKNP proposal. I have provided copies of Scotts 2013 report on which the proposal was based .

Since our work various Govt depts. (inc. former EPA, OEH, DPI). have spent in excess of \$1m on various koala assessments, many released just recently, All the subsequent work has essentially confirmed the results of our work in regard to the importance of the GKNP area for the conservation of wild koala populations.

#### 2. Government Dept. responses to supplementary questions on the proposed GKNP.

##### Question from the Inquiry to DPI -to Mr Justin Williams

Inquiry question 6. "In regards to your statement "The Australian Forest Products Association released economic modelling indicating that proposal would cost \$757 million a year to the NSW economy and cut almost 2000 jobs " . Your submission said that implementing the GKNP would reduce the availability of high-quality logs by about 40%. Does AFPA's economical modelling relate to this estimate of a 40% reduction in supply or does it relate to the entire wood supply agreement on the North Coast of NSW? If the latter, is the AFPA report an accurate appraisal of the impacts of the GKNP?"

Mr William's response on 16/9 said;

" Questions about the Australian Forest Products Association's modelling should be directed to that organisation."

In relation to the question and responses BEC notes that:

1. AFPA modelling related to the latter ie **"the entire wood supply agreement on the North Coast of NSW?"**

2, the assertion by Mr Williams that implementing the GKNP would reduce the availability of high-quality logs by about 40% is disputed as exaggeration of the likely impact the proposed GKNP on overall wood supply. The GKNP covers 23% of the state forests on the North Coast of NSW and additional timber is available from state and private hardwood and softwood plantations, private property and leasehold lands. The impact on available timber on the North Coast is more likely to be in the order of 10-15%

**Question from the Inquiry to Environment, Energy and Science Group – Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.**

*"Has any assessment of the proposed Great Koala National Park occurred within the Department? If so, can you provide a copy of the brief or instructions for the assessment including criteria for assessment and an expected timetable for the project? If not, is it possible for an assessment to occur?"*

**Response of 16/9**

*"An assessment is currently underway to calculate the extent to which the proposed Great Koala National Park captures suitable koala habitat, using the koala habitat information base. This includes analysing whether the proposed park would protect resident koala populations that occur within Areas of Regional Koala Significance"*

The BEC recommends the Inquiry seeks and reviews copies of any reports from the assessment including the terms of reference for those reports.

**3. Impacts of recent fires and potential resilience of the proposed GKNP to future fires.**

My experience with bushfires started with two weeks on a rake how crew on a major fire in the then Manning River National Forest in 1964 and has included periods in fire effects research, hazard reduction including large scale aerial incendiary based hazard reduction and in leadership major fire control activity.

Three of the four regional koala populations in the proposed GKNP were affected by the recent fires but nine, mostly coastal, sub-populations escaped the fires. See table 1 attached

I believe that the proposed GKNP as a potential future conservation reserve has some advantages against fire in :

1. Elevation range and dissected topography contributes to breaking up fire fronts .
2. Substantial patches and corridors of rainforest - although rainforest burnt - a major extent of the fire perimeters here were pulled up by rainforest and/or creeks, often without human assistance.
3. The GKNP does not have any major rain shadow valleys of predominantly dry eucalypts which, where they occurred, burnt extremely hot ( eg Nymboida, Willawarrin, Wyalaba) or drier river lowlands like Rappville.
4. A lot, lot more could have been done in applying rapid response and remote fire fighting techniques eg rapid aerial response to lightning strikes and tying fires off to moist gullies before extreme conditions hits them .

**4. The appearance of Michael Donovan**

The BEC requested that Michael be called as a witness to the Inquiry and has contributed to his expenses of travelling from regional South Australia and we thank the Inquiry for inviting him.

Michael has been nominated by the Gumbayngiirr people to represent them in consultation and negotiation in relation to the GKNP.

When we approached Michael before nominating him to appear he asked what we would like him to talk about. We suggested possibly two areas, viz;

1. An overview of the significance of the koala to the Gumbayngiirr people, and
2. How the Gumbayngiirr people would like to participate in the GKNP.

We hope Michael has an opportunity to address these topics and hopefully more of the rich connection his people have with the region.

#### **5. Future management of koalas across the landscape**

I have given a lot of thought to this issue and am happy to answer questions or provide future evidence

Ashley Love

28 January 2020



Proposed GKNP summary of impacts of 2019 Fires on Koala subpopulations  
Yellow highlighting indicates fire affected sub-populations. Grey shading indicates stable populations . See Scotts 2013

Reg Pop no.	Regional Population name	Reg Pop size	Sub-population name	Sub - pop no.	Sub-pop size	Status	D en sit y	Threat	Confidence	Comments	2019 fire impacts
1	South Bellinger – Nambucca – North Macleay	500-1000	Southern Coastal	1A	<50	D	L	H	Largely unknown	Urban and rural-residential development, dogs, road strike	UNBURNT
			Southern Hinterland	1B	50-500	S	L	M	Unknown	Stable but sparse; logging & fire	PARTLY BURNT
			Scotts Head – Ngambaa – Willawarrin	1C	50-500	D	L	M	Largely unknown	Overall declined particularly on private lands; state forests are potential strongholds but also declined; fire, logging	HEAVILY BURNT
2	Coffs Harbour-north Bellingen	>1000	Bongli Bongli - Pine Creek	2A	500-1000	S	H	L-M	Well known	Includes Bongli Bongli - Pine Creek core; logging, fire, vehicle strike	UNBURNT
			North Bellingen - Gleniffer	2B	50-500	D	M	M	Largely unknown	State Forest logging	UNBURNT
			Bonville	2C	50-500	D	M	H	Well known	Targeted and increasing urban and rural-residential development	UNBURNT
			Coffs Harbour - Toorina - Korora	2D	<50	D	M	H	Well known	Fragmented habitats; dogs, vehicle strike	UNBURNT
			Orara West - Boambee	2E	50-500	D	M	M	Well known	State Forest logging, fire	UNBURNT
			Coffs northern beaches	2F	<50	D	L	H	Well known	Highway upgrade, urban and rural-residential development, dogs	UNBURNT
			Lower Bucca - Orara East	2G	<50	D	L	H	Well known	State Forest logging, fire	UNBURNT
			Red Rock - Wedding Bells - Conglomerate	2H	<50	D	L	M	Unknown	State Forest logging, fire	HEAVILY BURNT
3	Coffs Harbour Hinterland	500-1000	Coffs Harbour Hinterland	3A	500-1000	S	M	M	Largely unknown	Predominantly State Forest. Can't distinguish sub-populations	HEAVILY BURNT
4	Chaelundi - Clouds Creek - West Dorrigo	50-500	Chaelundi - Clouds Creek	4A	50-500	S	M	M	Largely unknown	Predominantly State Forest & National Park	PARTLY BURNT
			West Dorrigo	4B	<50	D	L	M	Largely unknown	Fragmented and sparse population	PARTLY BURNT



