

**Submission
No 73**

INQUIRY INTO KOALA POPULATIONS AND HABITAT IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Keep Sydney Beautiful

Date Received: 1 August 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Inquiry into Koala Populations and Habitat in New South Wales.

Keep Sydney Beautiful is a community group focused on the protection of Sydney's heritage and environment. We have been involved with advocating for the Koala and in particular, as a Sydney based community group, the Campbelltown/Macarthur Koala population as well as making recommendations for strong biodiversity and native vegetation.

In particular, is our submission to the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer's Report of the Independent Review into the Decline of Koala Population in Key Areas of NSW. We include this submission as part of our response to Committee as many of the concerns and comments we made are relevant to the Terms and Reference of this Upper House Committee.

This submission is attached as a supplementary file in this inquiry.

The Koala population NSW is in crisis. We note the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer's Report of the Independent Review into the Decline of Koala population in Key Areas of NSW (2017) documented an alarming picture for the species. The number of koala readings in NSW has declined by 26% over the past three koala generations (15-20 years). So far government efforts to arrest the decline have failed.

We believe the Chief Scientist's report should have set alarm bells ringing at all levels of government and action needs to be taken.

NSW is now at risk of losing this iconic species. Arguably, the koala is Australia's most beloved and internationally recognised animal. It is a very important economic contributor to the state's tourism.

Keep Sydney Beautiful believes that Local Governments, NSW Government and Federal Government must declare a Koala State of Emergency for the remaining Koala populations and act accordingly.

Mount Gilead Campbelltown

In their report *The Koalas of Campbelltown, south-west Sydney; Does their natural history foretell an unnatural future?* The authors' contend that " the long term future of this koala population depends on maintaining the integrity of koala habitat throughout the region as well as the Campbelltown LGA. Only a long term commitment koala and their habitat will prevent the natural history of Campbelltown's koala from transforming into an unnatural future over the next 210 years"

Despite the warnings, Campbelltown Council re zoned the Mount Gilead property from Protected Scenic to residential development and the State government has identified the Macarthur area as an urban growth priority area. Many properties with Koala habitat trees are now at risk of being cleared. In particular is the Mount Gilead property now owned by Lendlease and rebranded as Figtree Hill.

On 24th July, the Campbelltown Local Planning panel approved DA 3868/2017/DA-CW from proponent Lendlease for tree removal and earthworks which will result in hundreds of Koala habitat and corridor trees being removed from the property.

The Planning Panel cited the urban release and EPBC Act as a reason for approval. Ironically, the way the EPBC Act has been applied will ultimately see the population isolated and eventually die off as the Koalas will be left without habitat and corridor trees and be fenced in all along Appin Road with no crossings provided.

This is a distressing and unacceptable response to this particular Koala population and an example of all 3 levels of government having failed the species as they prioritise development in Koala habitat.

Offsets, translocation are not conservation and the Biodiversity and Conservation Act should be re-examined.

Development and koalas can co-exist but currently, the protections for koalas are meaningless.

Recommendations

Create a State of Emergency for NSW Koala populations applicable to local, state and federal governments.

Protect and prioritise Koala habitat/corridors from land clearing, logging, mining, development and agribusiness

Reverse the Biodiversity and Conservation Act, which has weakened protections for threatened wildlife including the Koala, resulted in less biodiversity and operates with flawed model of offsets as conservation.

Create and implement a Koala Habitat Regeneration Strategy

Compensate landowners for protection of Koala habitat/corridors where necessary

Complete mapping of Koala populations in NSW

Advocate that the EPBC Act is changed so that Koalas are defined as critically endangered or best case, endangered

Strengthen SEPP 44 Koala Habitat protection

Strengthen protections of critically endangered woodlands that are also Koala habitat.

Create the Great North Koala National Park Northern NSW and ensure Gilead (Figtree Hill) and other properties such as Beulah are part of the Koala protection area. Force developers with koala habitat already rezoned such as Gilead, to not only leave koala habitat trees but increase plantings with a dedicated corridor on the property

Create the Two Rivers National park South Western Sydney

Create the Great North Koala National Park

Fully realise the tourism potential of the Koala in their natural setting

Provide overhead wildlife crossings with road upgrades in their habitat as a standard practice.

Acknowledge the effects of climate change on the species and accelerate the loss of the species.

Since 2017, we have seen Marcarthur Urban Land release take place and the rezoning of various properties