

**Submission  
No 96**

**INQUIRY INTO KOALA POPULATIONS AND HABITAT IN  
NEW SOUTH WALES**

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## Submission to the Inquiry into Koala Populations and Habitat in New South Wales

Dear Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my concern to this important inquiry into Koala populations and habitats. My hope is that the results of this inquiry will assist the NSW Government to adopt strategies that will stop the current decline in koalas and other endangered species, thereby avoiding extinctions.

If the current situation is allowed to continue and policies do not change as a matter of urgency, we will see more koala deaths and dwindling populations leading to local extinctions.

We know the problems, we have the solutions to turn this around and the Government has the power to achieve this.

*Protecting habitat is number one, the most urgent and most important action that can be taken in the protection of koalas.*

Therefore one of the highest and most serious impacts on koalas and koala habitat is from:

*(i) the Coastal Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals and Regional Forest Agreements.*

The new RFAs and CIFOAs approved in 2018 have changed the rules of the game. They allow for a considerable increase in timber quantity to be taken from our public native forests and increased logging intensity with greatly reduced numbers of habitat and fodder trees per ha required to be retained.

With the modern larger logging machinery now in use, this is logging of public native forests on an industrialised scale which ensures destruction of koala habitat. Even the few trees required to be retained are often damaged because of the sheer size of the machinery, lack of manoeuvrability and damage from trees as they are felled.

There is no longer any requirement for a physical koala search before logging commences with reliance now being on a maps.

Habitat is further diminished by the reduced buffers to protect riparian zones on headwaters, now only 5m is required to be retained along stream headwaters and forestry roading and fording is permitted in those already seriously inadequate protected areas.

Retired loggers that I have spoken to are saddened and very concerned that what used to be a sustainable industry with genuine selective logging is now 'smash and grab' leaving devastation and no yield for future years.

Prior to the approval of the RFAs, we attended the community engagement process with heads of the various departments and were shown their plans for the coastal strip between Grafton and Taree which has been targeted for clear-fell in coups of 44-60ha blocks. Referred to as intensive logging but in reality it is clear-fell as almost no trees are retained. No habitat retained and no corridor.

*(ii) the Private Native Forestry Code of Practice,*

*We must ensure that private native forestry is genuinely selective and low impact. Regulations need to be in place to ensure that native forests are not felled for pulp or pelletising to be burned for electricity. This is not renewable and is more polluting than coal. We lose the habitat, the carbon storage and add to greenhouse gases.*

*(iii) the old growth forest remapping and rezoning program.*

It would be foolish to rezone these previously protected old growth forests for timber. Even if some trees are not technically old growth, they have been protected under the CAR reserve for 20 years; they should be left intact and protected for the future old growth that they will soon become, so valuable not only for prime koala habitat and other species who rely on the hollow bearing trees but also for their superior carbon storage and sequestration ability. Last year's report from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change could not have been clearer: we must stop deforestation and embark on massive reforestation projects. Counter productive to log our old trees and plant saplings. We must look to the future, not think only of profits for a corporation today.

I have not seen any sign of the effectiveness of State Environmental Planning Policy 44 - Koala Habitat Protection, the NSW Koala Strategy and the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016, including the threatened species provisions and associated regulations, in protecting koala habitat and responding to key threats. All these policies are full of good sounding words and intentions which fail koalas at every application for development. I cannot think of one development which has been refused in order to protect koalas. Forestry, Mining and the Pacific Highway are clear examples. Lack of serious regulation, enforcement and resources mean that clearing of native vegetation can and does take place without penalty.

We must protect 'Koala Hubs' on all land tenures, these hubs have been identified by the OE&H as areas of particular importance for koalas.

Areas of climate refugia must be identified and protected as a matter of urgency.

We must protect all known koala habitat from land clearing, identifying it as 'Areas of Outstanding Biodiversity Value' or 'Category 2 Sensitive Land'. This will require Local Governments to urgently complete the mapping of koala habitat for holistic protection.

SEPP 44 regulations need to be strengthened to ensure koala habitat is not destroyed by urban developments.

As weather extremes make western areas less hospitable North East NSW will become even more important for koala habitat. I urge you to recommend creating the Great Koala National Park and other NPA reserve proposals which I understand have been presented to the committee to protect koalas in north east NSW.

The North Coast public native forests also are important areas for Koalas and boast a diverse range of threatened flora and fauna, a great attraction for tourism from around the world. Could this be a more sustainable use of our public native forests, providing reserves for koalas and jobs for rangers and in forest restoration?

The area South West of Sydney needs a National Park to ensure that rapid ongoing development does not come at a high cost to koalas.

If we have the will, I believe we have a good chance of ensuring that our iconic koala is with us for future generations to enjoy but if we continue with this disregard for other species and the attitude that they must be swept aside for our business as usual, then koalas and other threatened species will continue to die & be the next extinction.

Thank you for your attention and I urge you to secure a future for koalas by prioritising protection their habitat.

Yours Sincerely

Meg K Nielsen