

**Submission  
No 103**

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

**Name:** Mrs Patricia Edwards

**Date Received:** 29 July 2019

---

Dear Committee,

Thank you for instigating the inquiry into koala population and habitat in NSW. Please accept this letter as my submission to the Inquiry. Please note that this submission may already have been forwarded to the Committee under the Nature Conservation Council's template letter.

I consent to the committee making this submission and my name public.

Koala numbers are now well-known to have reached a crisis point. Yet the coalition government seems to view the funding made available through the Biodiversity Trust Fund as sufficient to bring back koala numbers, while at the same time reaping some short-term brownie points by enabling landowners, developers and State Forests to clear, burn and otherwise destroy koala habitat at will.

There is no true consideration of the very few simple needs koalas have to survive. Nor apparently is there any Liberal /National politician with the ability – or will – to stop and envision the terrible shame and global condemnation that will surely be aimed at Australia if koalas become extinct in the wild. Hence they continue to let one \$1billion industry slip quietly away, while throwing more and more good money after bad in support of a now highly tenuous farming industry

As koala coordinator for WIRES for 12 years to 2017 I saw first-hand the dreadful toll climate change associated drought and heat waves were having on koalas by draining the last vestiges of life-giving water from the only food they can eat. Every day in these increasingly dire conditions they come down from the trees, riddled with stress-related Chlamydia, empty-gutted and dehydrated, slowly dying of starvation and thirst while to any unobservant eye the trees still hold their leaves so are expected to be providing everything the koalas could need. Very few of these koalas can be saved. By the time they come down to the ground, it is too late.

I would therefore like the committee to ensure that some immediate and concrete top level government action comes out of this inquiry to help restore our koala populations. First and foremost I seek some vocal recognition that the chief obstacle for koalas is having their welfare and future existence firmly embedded in the Planning Act – an all-encompassing piece of legislation with a specific aim of aiding and facilitating human development. By this Act, which also includes the SEPP44, there needs to be no consideration for koalas, nor their habitat, except where a development application is required. I therefore suggest this now needs to change; that the totally inadequate SEPP44 be amended, and that koalas, as well as the shameful > 1000 other species threatened with extinction in NSW be removed from the Planning Act and protected under their own legislation.

I recognise that this will call for some very strong and visionary leadership from our State government, something that has been seriously absent from environmental issues over the terms of the last three Premiers. I therefore support the Nature Conservation Council ' approach in asking the committee to urge a change in direction by our NSW government by :

- expanding our National Parks network to encompass genuine existing and known koala habitat and cell populations, including creating the Great Koala National Park on the NSW mid-north coast.
- Developing a transition to end logging of public native forests as well as all old growth trees and identified koala food trees on public and private land.
- Rejecting the Government's proposal to open up national parks to logging
- Ruling out burning native forests or post-logging "waste" for electricity
- Urgently protecting all koala habitat across the State from development
- Placing an immediate Tree Preservation Order on all remaining and plantings of Forest Red Gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*), which are known to be the favoured food and main support species for koalas along the entire coastal strip

I thank the committee for this opportunity to have some input into this review, and also for your time and effort taken to address the extreme hazards and hurdles currently confronting our remaining koalas.

Yours sincerely,  
Patricia Edwards (2460)