

**Submission
No 120**

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

Name: Mrs Diana Pryde

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Dear Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the NSW inquiry into Koala Populations and Habitats. I am very pleased that this committee has been set up, as I am very disturbed and unhappy about the perilous situation for the survival of koalas in NSW.

I have been following the plight of koalas in south west Sydney near Wollondilly and Campbelltown. I am particularly concerned that the disease free healthy population of approx. 1,000 is under threat from development and road widening. Twenty-one disease free koalas were hit and killed on Appin Rd between 2015 to 2018. Widening Appin Road is going to result in more koala deaths. Development Applications should include Wildlife Movement Solutions such as the building of overpasses and underpasses and fencing that channels koalas and other wildlife to safe places to cross. These structures should be designed in consultation with ecologists who are experts in koalas and other native animals in the area and well maintained. The Compton Road landbridge south of Brisbane is an example of best practice.

All the data that has been obtained on koala movements, especially that collected by Prof. Robert Close, should be taken into account in all stages of planning. Accommodating wildlife and in particular koalas should not be an afterthought. It should be mandatory for developers to leave well established koala trees. The Lendlease project at Mt Gilead in Campbelltown originally claimed that koalas were not using the area despite local knowledge of it being a wildlife corridor for a variety of native animals including koalas. The NSW government is planning to build some fencing, however, it is imperative that koalas have an escape route in the event of bushfire, and also that they are not cut off from other colonies when they need genetic diversity to survive.

There is an obvious need to protect koalas as they move through their territories. Understanding their behaviour is essential if koalas are to survive and thrive. "Campbelltown Koalas" have been tracked over many years. Their range extends at least as far as Holsworthy and Moorebank to the north, Sutherland Shire to the east, Darkes Forest to the southeast, Appin to the south, and the Nepean River to the southwest. Koala habitat needs to be protected and koalas need to be able to move freely through their natural range. An Upper Georges River National Park as proposed by Patricia Durman of the National Parks Association of NSW (Macarthur Branch) would be a positive step forward in protecting koalas along the Georges River. (Refer to link below)

<https://npansw.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Georges-River-NP-Proposal-complete-31.08.2017.pdf>

Forests have been declining in NSW since colonisation, and they are continuing to dwindle. Only 9% of the native forests that remain are protected in national parks or conservation areas. If we are to stop the koala going extinct in NSW our governments need to also stop logging in state forests. (Nature Conservation Council of NSW <https://www.nature.org.au/our-campaigns/ending-deforestation/>) Today as I am writing this submission, the beautiful Tarkeeth Forest near Bellingen is being logged and burnt as part of the Forestry Corporation's commercial process that extracts logs for woodchip export to Asia. This forest is home to many unique native animals including koalas. This seems reckless in the extreme. Such burns destroy habitat trees, often hundreds of years old. Big old trees hundreds of years old, containing a great variety of tree hollows which need to be valued and looked after. There is overwhelming evidence that we should be preserving our forests and keeping carbon in the ground if we are to have any chance of slowing down the rate of global warming.

I am also very disturbed by the increase of land clearing rates across the state. The removal of native vegetation has sky rocketed since the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and *Local Land Services* “As a result of these new laws, 99% of identified koala habitat on private land can be bulldozed.” (Nature Conservation Council of NSW <https://www.nature.org.au/our-campaigns/ending-deforestation/>)

I urge you to take the following actions:

Create the Great Koala National Park and implement other NPA reserve proposals presented to the Committee to protect koalas in north-east NSW—a region that will become more and more important as weather extremes make western areas less hospitable.

1. Protect ‘koala hubs’ (areas identified by the Office of Environment and Heritage as particularly important for koalas) immediately on all land tenures.
2. Identify and protect koala climate refugia as a matter of urgency.
3. End industrialised logging on public land that destroys habitat quality for koalas and ensure Private Native Forestry is genuinely low-impact and selective.
4. Protect known koala habitat from land clearing by identifying it as Category 2-sensitive land or Areas of Outstanding Biodiversity Value, and urgently require local governments to complete the mapping of koala habitat for holistic protection.
5. Strengthen SEPP 44 (koala habitat protection) to ensure koala habitat is not destroyed by urban development and;
6. Create a new national park in south-west Sydney from Glenfield to Wilton including the Upper Georges River National Park and link across Appin Road and Mount Gilead.

I would like to see much more done to secure the survival of our iconic koalas for future generations.

Yours sincerely,

Diana Pryde