

**Submission
No 153**

INQUIRY INTO KOALA POPULATIONS AND HABITAT IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Koalas In Care Inc

Date Received: 4 August 2019



KOALAS IN CARE Inc.

Servicing Greater Taree, Great Lakes and Gloucester Areas

PO BOX 1249 TAREE NSW 2430

ph/fax:

mobile:

email:

web: www.koalasincare.org.au

ABN 78 337 974 646

28 July 2019

Attn: Ms Cate Faehrmann,
Committee Chair,
The Director, Portfolio Committee No 7,
Parliament House,
Macquarie Street,
SYDNEY. NSW 2000

Dear Ms Faehrmann,

Our association KOALAS IN CARE INC is the OEH licensed koala rescue & rehabilitation group which services an area of 843 000 hectares from Johns River to the north, to Bulahdelah in the south & west to Gloucester on the Mid-North Coast of NSW. My wife, Christeen, & I co-founded KOALAS IN CARE INC in 2005 however we both have been working in this area since 1993 giving us over 26 years of field, rescue & rehabilitation experience with koalas. On average, we admit 65-80 koalas to our specialised facility in Taree each year but in 2018/2019 115 were admitted.

Local History of Koalas

As with other areas along the east coast of Australia, our koala population has experienced a significant reduction in population numbers and available habitat. Extracts from local newspapers (circa 1880) clearly document the large numbers of koalas that were hunted for their skins. Today numbers are drastically reduced in comparison to the above newspaper excerpt, and are having to contend with reduced mosaic of available habitat, motor vehicles, dogs, horses, livestock and an increase in disease ie chlamydia.

In our 26 years of working with koalas we have observed first-hand two areas of localised extinctions. Firstly, in the Taree urban fringe/future urban expansion areas & secondly the Cundletown urban area & surrounding rural residential areas. In less than two generations of koala presence both the above areas have historically experienced almost daily sightings of koalas to the present time where only rare, if any are observed. These extinctions are directly related to loss of habitat to cater for urban & rural residential expansion.

Currently, and for some period of time, koalas are mostly restricted to the Tinonee area to the west of Taree, generally restricted to an area of less than 10000 hectares. Much of this area is a mosaic of fragmented landscapes & often as little as single trees along road reserves. It is also recognised that available habitat often comprises only secondary species food trees, and that the majority of the koala population is present on private property.

A recent study commissioned by Midcoast Council & performed by Biolink Consultants has confirmed our field work observations of the Tinonee koala population including human inflicted problems such as historic clearing for agriculture, roads dissecting habitat & free ranging domestic dogs on rural residential properties

In regards to legislation designed to protect koalas, one that has been grossly ineffective is SEPP 44.

- The Schedule 2 Tree Species List is insufficient for koala food tree species in our area & therefore fails to trigger the Legislation.
- The Policy places little relevance on the secondary or marginal habitat where much of our area's koala population exists. 'Core Habitat' classifications simply don't address actual koalas home ranges in a disturbed landscape of secondary or marginal habitat.
- We have experienced on many occasions whereby the consultants only survey the actual allotments in question regardless of the presence of koalas or suitable habitat adjoining the above allotments.

FOREST CORPORATION logging has been very intensive in compartments west of the Taree Bypass area which undoubtedly has had a detrimental impact on available habitat.

The restructure of OEH has had a negative effect on our working relationship with our local area National Parks & Wildlife staff. There appears to be an inherent lack of interest in performing any duties to assist wildlife or address wildlife issues.

Whilst OEH have engaged in several 'Save our Species' programs in our area, we believe resources would achieve maximum benefit to our area's koalas if directed to actual tree planting at sites within the area of highest koala activity ie Tinonee.

In relation to future residential & rural residential expansion in the Tinonee area we believe Midcoast Council should work towards a joint approach with the State Government to acquire & preserve land within the Tinonee area that will ensure our wild koala population will be protected for future generations.

Finally, for a variety of reasons it is abundantly clear that our population of koalas in the Manning, Great Lakes, & Gloucester area has not been acknowledged, while other populations in the Hunter/Port Macquarie/Lismore areas are regularly referenced & highlighted. It is therefore imperative that our population is given the recognition it rightfully deserves and will benefit from the same level of protection via any programs afforded to other areas stated above.

Yours faithfully,

Paul McLeod,
President.

Providing Help for Koalas in Need