

**Submission
No 170**

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

Name: Ms Prudence Wawn

Date Received: 31 July 2019

Since May 2012, koalas have been listed as vulnerable in NSW because of relentless habitat loss. Land clearing has more than trebled in the bush since the NSW govt repealed the Native Vegetation Act (2003) and under the impact of the current Biodiversity Conservation Act. It's been a disaster. These laws do not protect but instead enable farmers to turn valuable bush into a dustbowl. The safeguards have been removed and we have the evidence. Those koala colonies remaining must be protected where they are - not moved to elsewhere. Offsets do not work because they are territorial creatures and survival rates are low. In expanding urban areas where colonies exist nearby and are unprotected, we must prevent koalas and cars from mixing by erecting climb-proof fencing. Unfortunately this will add to the already severe impacts of habitat fragmentation, with wildlife increasingly isolated in smaller and smaller patches. Therefore it is vital that animals such as koalas continue to wander widely, but without the threats posed by fast-moving vehicles. Structures specifically designed for wildlife to cross roads safely must be installed - over and under all new roads. Most large box culverts are almost always full of water, and wildlife can be reluctant to get their feet wet. Nonetheless, these square pipes offer a possible wildlife passage solution. By attaching a wide ledge to the side of the culvert leading from one side of the road to the other, animals can traverse away from the danger zone above. A remarkable variety of fauna including echidnas, wallabies, possums and goannas, plus numerous koalas were captured on the monitoring cameras and tracked by various technologies. These otherwise arboreal marsupials had discovered a way of avoiding the great risks of the traffic above by travelling below on an artificial ledge over water in a dark tunnel. The simplicity of the structure and the willingness of the koalas to try something new suggests it is possible to design urban pathways so koalas can have a better chance of avoiding cars. Realistically we must establish koala protection parks around those sturdy colonies still surviving. I urge the govt to create new and effective legislation to actually protect forests and prevent further destruction of woodlands and habitats for the benefit of all native fauna in view of the climate crisis we all face.