

**Submission  
No 172**

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

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Thank you for accepting my submission into this important enquiry.

As a wildlife carer of many years I welcome the chance to speak up for an endangered icon. Many people believe the koala to be an Australian icon – but they often fail to understand that it only lives in a limited band of the Eastern Australian forest ranges and only remains in a few pockets.

Excessive tree-clearing and urban development have destroyed and fragmented the remaining habitat. Despite declared intent by the NSW Parliament and the expenditure of millions of dollars of public monies, koala populations have continued to decline at an accelerating rate with a conservative 26% decline in NSW, and a 50% decline on the North Coast, over the past 15-21 years (North East Forest Alliance Submission to: Developing a NSW Koala Strategy Proposed Priorities Action Statement amendment Draft koala habitat protection SEPP Dailan Pugh, March 2017). Saving the koala has gone far beyond growing some trees in opportune areas uninteresting for human development. We need to protect every known population in situ AND dramatically improve the conditions for the remaining animals if we want to ensure the survival of this species.

It is our duty to take urgent action now to:

- Stop any further habitat loss for known koala populations
- Not accept any ridiculous biobanking proposals, where for instance immature trees being planted somewhere outside of a populations range are supposed to make up for lost actual home ranges.
- Declare the Great Koala National Park, the Two Rivers Frontier Koala National Park and the Georges River Koala National Park asap
- Regulate koala-human-interface compatibility goals according to experts' recommendations
- Stop any further fragmentation and instead prioritise interconnectivity of remaining habitat
- And with a huge percentage of remaining koala populations being on private land, we need to urgently tighten laws against deforestation
- End logging in old growth forests
- Create re-forestation targets for NSW

A particularly urgent plight must be made for the South Western Sydney koala colony near Campbelltown. These koalas are the only Chlamydia free and expanding koala population left in NSW. Yet incredibly, ever more developments get approved right in their territory. A major threat to the colony is the development of the Mt. Gilead Estate. Once their land is cleared of trees and many koalas forced out of their range forces koalas onto the ground and makes them vulnerable to motor vehicle accidents and dog attacks.

Planned upgrades to Appin Road will add further stress.

Both developments also hinder movement of koalas – which have quite large home ranges – and cuts the corridor to other koala populations which also creates genetic isolation as an additional threat.

South West Sydney koalas and should not be endangered by roads or development for housing. But the minimum requirements would be adding several, minimum 425m wide koala corridors as well as landscaped, wide overpasses across major roads.

Instead, koalas will be trapped behind RMS's and Lendlease's exclusion fence with no ability to escape from bushfires or other catastrophes, and cut off from reaching prime koala habitat or a different gene pool by interfacing with populations in the Blue Mountains, ensuring the population will inevitably be lost. This is an officially sanctioned 'localised Koala extinction plan', solely designed to benefit a private developer at the cost of the survival of our most iconic species.

It is important to recognise that the soil types and trees within the Holsworthy Military Reserve are not the preferred type for koalas yet the soil along the ridge line produces trees that Koalas thrive on, hence being an important foundation for a healthy, expanding & moving population. New plantings of eucalypt trees, although deserving, will not be functional for koalas for at least another decade, and cannot in anyway compare to the importance of old growth forests.

Koalas are an umbrella species. So anything we do for koalas will ultimately help to face the widespread biodiversity and extinction crisis we are currently facing, thus adding even more importance and urgency to decisive action being taken by the NSW Parliament now.

Thank you very much for considering this heartfelt submission.

Best regards,

Daniela Osiander