

**Submission
No 181**

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

Name: Ms Rachel King

Date Received: 1 August 2019

I live in . I volunteered for a wildlife rescue group for a number of years. I did rescues and some possum caring. But my consistent role over several years was manning the phones every Sunday afternoon. Through that role you get to know every rescuer and the types of rescue situations and eventually end up with a broad understanding of the fate of wildlife in the region. Koalas are in steep decline. In previous decades cars were the biggest cause of koala fatalities. In the past decade car fatalities have dropped - but this is not due to motorists miraculously getting better at not hitting them. Their numbers have plummeted. The climate has changed. Their habitat has shrunk. Hectares of koala habitat in the Port Stephens area have been cleared for housing. They are on the path to extinction. It's almost inevitable. The only thing in this one-minute-to-midnight era that could possibly save the koala is if we DO EVERYTHING. This means NO MORE LAND CLEARING. Not a single additional tree should be chopped down. And if any wordy report from an expert starts blathering on about "offsets" these reports need to be shoved right back up their bums. There is no such thing. You want to plant extra trees - plant extra trees. And don't chop down the ones in your way. Just don't do it. Offsets are absolute rubbish. It doesn't matter how many seedlings are planted by grinning politicians in hard hats and dress shoes for the cameras. Old trees are the trees the animals need. You think a bunch of struggling koalas, stuck in a decimated forests in searing temperatures with elevated incidence of bushfires, can wait around for new seedlings to replace proper trees? You think koalas can summon an Uber to take them across the new patch of nothing to another forest that might suit them better? Every single thing that can be done to save the koala must be done. Every single thing that damages their environment must not be done. That's the only recipe that leads to any skerrick of a chance for these animals. And stop commissioning or accepting bullshit reports to justify environmental destruction. Blind Freddy can see that's bullshit. I attach a photo of a koala I rescued in 2014. You can call him Blind Freddy if you like. He was found in the middle of the road late at night by Wollemi residents who picked him up and brought him back to their horse stables. He was blind from chlamydia. Even though he was a completely wild animal, he let me pick him up and put him in a carrier. I drove him back to Newcastle where he found his way to expert koala carers. On the car journey, he was in the seat next to me and was fretting. I kept leaning over and patting his head through a gap in the carrier. Even though he had never been on contact with people, he drew comfort from the pats and calmed down. Luckily this koala survived. After months of painstaking care from volunteers, his infection cleared up, his sight returned and he was released back where he came from. Does government have any idea how many unpaid hours go into wildlife rescue? Does government have any idea about true value? Value is not money, it's what makes life worth living. Stop chopping down trees. Stop destroying habitat. Plant more trees. Pay wildlife rescuers. Do good things. Don't be evil. If you can't explain your actions to five year olds who love animals without lying or twisting the truth or glossing over wilful destruction for money, you are doing the wrong thing. And I'm gonna tell on you. The five year olds are gonna kick your ass and I'll be there lifting them up so their little legs can reach.