

INQUIRY INTO KOALA POPULATIONS AND HABITAT IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Team Koala
Date Received: 2 August 2019



RE: The NSW Inquiry into Koala Populations and Habitats

Dear Committee,

Our group, over 1,500 strong, has been instrumental in ensuring the survival of koala populations in the Tweed region of NSW, for over a decade.

On behalf of our members I ask you to consider the **following submission** to the Inquiry into Koala Populations and Habitats. I believe urgent action is needed and stress the importance of this enquiry in guiding the NSW government to implement steps that will see koala declines reversed before it is too late.

Independent ecologist studies (undertaken by WWF) indicate that koalas in NSW are on track to extinction by 2050 – their numbers are now below 20,000. The committee should understand that this trajectory can be averted but we need urgent action. We know the problems and we know the solutions. The government has the power to choose which future it wants for koalas.

We have examples like Pittwater and SE NSW that show us the results of inaction. The Tweed Coast koalas are now classified as a “Locally Endangered Community”. We will continue to see dwindling populations, koala deaths and local extinctions. It is broadly understood that protecting habitat is the first and most important step in protecting koalas. I therefore urge you to take the following actions:

1. End industrialised logging on public land that destroys habitat quality for koalas and ensure Private Native Forestry is genuinely low-impact and selective. This is a critical aspect that will impact the efficacy of all other measures. It is dealt with in more detail below.
2. Create the Great Koala National Park and implement other NPA reserve proposals presented to the Committee to protect koalas in NE NSW—a region that will become more and more important as weather extremes make western areas less hospitable.
3. Protect ‘koala hubs’ (areas identified by the Office of Environment and Heritage as particularly important for koalas) immediately on all land tenures
4. Identify and protect koala climate refugia as a matter of urgency
5. 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
6. Strengthen SEPP 44 (koala habitat protection) to ensure koala habitat is not destroyed by urban development
7. Create a new national park in SW Sydney to ensure rapid development does not come at the cost of koalas.

Please refer to the WWF “Koala Habitat Conservation Plan 2019” for detailed research & analysis into all of the above points.



Point 1. Industrial logging.

It is very concerning that the Government recently chose to extend "Regional Forest Agreements" (or "IFOA's") for another 20 years. These new logging rules will make it legal to dramatically intensify logging throughout NSW. This flies in the face of evidence that for the last 20 years RFAs have facilitated logging in our forests that has driven many species – including koalas, quolls and gliders – closer to the brink of extinction. This decision also extends intensive logging in a new "Intensive Harvesting Zone" that *overlaps strongly with the Great Koala National Park proposal (Pt 2. above)*

Scientists have called for thorough reassessment of RFA's amid extensive evidence that they represent a failed model. Native forest logging – predominantly the "clear felling" method - has pushed forest wildlife to extinction. In addition the NSW government has reduced stream buffers, and sanctioned the logging of giant trees thereby destroying trees that are "hollow bearing" and provide homes for threatened species that rely on them.

Even further – it is proposing to **"remap and rezone" protected Old Growth forests**. These forests were preserved in return for granting RFAs in the 1990s – it is inconceivable that these forests could now be "re-traded" out of the public domain and into the hands of the logging industry when they were granted in exchange for logging that has occurred over the past 30 years.

It is vital that the committee addresses this policy direction. It is certainly not optimal use of public native forest particularly as it eliminates their function in carbon storage and it is deeply unpopular throughout Australia.

The Government has been proposing a national strategy to save the koala for the past 5 years. If we can implement the steps proposed here the koala will stand a chance of surviving in NSW. Continuing in our current direction will see koalas continuing to die and to slide towards extinction.

I urge you to secure the future of koalas by taking decisive action to protect habitat.

Yours sincerely,

Marion Riordan

Jenny Hayes
President – Team Koala

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On behalf of

Team Koala - Tweed Coast Koala Protection
Saving Our Endangered Koalas on the Tweed
President: Jenny Hayes

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