

Submission  
No 212

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. When I think of all that is wrong in politics, I think the wilful marching towards the extinction of a native icon best encapsulates the validity of my despair. The Audit Office recent report on Land Clearing regulation gets to the heart of the cause of the imminent demise of Koalas. Land clearing is not effectively regulated. The laws need to be rewritten. In the meantime, the last surviving healthy Sydney colony of Koalas is being wiped out with the approval of the Independent Planning Commission - for example Mt Gilead development. The evidence is readily available on why koalas are heading to extinction - it is because their habitat is being destroyed; urban encroachment; car strike; feral animals and stress from the combination of all these factors. There is no political will to stop land clearing. In fact we are seeing perverse proposals such as removing national park status to 'create jobs'; and road extensions (eg Pacific Highway upgrade) that carve through known koala habitat.. The concept of 'strategic biodiversity offsetting' approval process for western Sydney has been designed to help developers clear land - even when it is known that adequate land to 'offset' isn't even available. The offsetting is designed to be as easy as possible; to minimise costs for developers; and to ignore the biodiversity impact. Developers can simply pay into a fund, this money can then be used for animal hospitals. Animals in hospitals and in zoos is the vision the NSW and CTH Governments have for our native animals. The NSW Koala Strategy is a waste of \$44 million - the only way this government can conceive of valuing koalas - is to pay landowners to 'protect' the koalas - but there is such poor targeting of the program it is wholly inadequate. There have been no new national parks created; land clearing regulations are purposefully ineffective; biodiversity offsetting is trading us down to nothing. Where the koalas live in Sydney, we tolerate letting them and their joeys being killed by car strikes, we don't build overpasses. There is no chance this government will do anything. They have destroyed the Department of Environment so it is now subsumed within planning - as a result housing targets are prioritised over biodiversity and inter-generational equity when it comes to protecting our natural heritage. The Department of Planning is complicit in the decline of our native animals as simply 'collateral damage'. The government has evidence, information, knowledge and the capacity to take action that will protect the koala but it refuses. This is because its stakeholders of the Liberal Party are developers who would much prefer to fell clear and then develop. The Greater Sydney Commission is also to blame for the 'Three Cities' plan which is authorising urban sprawl. Note the complete inconsistency between 'green parkland city' and '5 million trees' (\$36 million) and the actual outcome of accelerated land clearing under the government land clearing and biodiversity laws. So to save the koala, you need to reform legislation; reform governance; and reform political/developer relations. You also need political will. All of these things are absent. The Commonwealth won't hold up its end of the bargain under the EPBC Act.