

**Submission
No 226**

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

Name: Mr Gregory Hall

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Dear Committee,

It is, by now, well known that the Koala populations in NSW are in steep decline. The reasons are many, but economical opportunities are available to stem, and eventually reverse this decline.

The Koala enjoys a popular status on a similar rank to that of the Whales. Very considerable joy is experienced by those fortunate enough to sight them in the wild. In consequence, very many tourist journeys are made to popular locations in the hope of such sightings. It is also well known that significant expenditure results from these quests.

It is also no secret that many would-be Koala tourists are disappointed, as there are now so few in the wild. The tragedy is that the most accessible sightings are to be had in koala hospitals and other captive areas.

The inexorable spread of housing and other development into koala habitat not only compromises the quality of the remaining habitat, but exposes these vulnerable creatures to vehicle strike and dog attack. The control of these by speed limits and dog ownership controls are politically unpopular, so unlikely to be sufficiently strong to make the difference needed, however desirable.

The SEPP44 program, intended to provide 'certainty' for both the koala habitat, and the private landholder, has been beset by problems from the outset, and is in need of major revision.

It is a worthy aim, but unlikely that sufficient protection for the Koala to thrive in residential or 'developed' areas can be provided, so it is wise to look for those other areas where reasonable protection can be provided, at reasonable cost.

Alas, the status of our wildlife is not well understood, largely because insufficient and inconsistent survey effort has been invested. Rather, the agencies responsible have adopted an ad-hoc approach, whereby incidental records of wildlife sightings are occasionally used to create mathematical models of low to unknown reliability. Nevertheless, recent such work has resulted in several data products that give the best available indication of habitat suitable for the survival of the Koala.

This habitat is generally the forested areas, partly National Parks, partly State Forests, and of course, some in privately-owned forested land. It is clear from the observed population trends that the areas in National Parks are insufficient to arrest or reverse the decline. Effective controls on private land have proved politically unpalatable to date.

It is also clear that the harvesting activities in State Forests have a deleterious effect on the populations of Koala. Recent simplifications, under the CIFOA, of the requirements to effectively survey for and protect suitably large areas of Koala habitat will accelerate the decline.

These state forests represent the most cost-effective opportunities for conservation of the Koala. The present forestry and harvesting activities employ few, the management of these activities by the State-owned forestry corporation is unwieldy and expensive, and the many potential benefits of alternative practices are unexamined.

In many parts of the world, conventional forestry practices have been recognised as damaging to the many other values of forests. Where managed for conservation, they also provide habitat for

wildlife, recreational opportunities, better quality and quantity of water in streams and rivers, and of course, the increasingly important carbon capture and storage.

Yours
Gregory Hall