

**Submission
No 214**

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

Name: Mr Garth Newton

Date Received: 1 August 2019

Dear Committee Members,

Please accept this submission to the inquiry into koala populations and habitat in New South Wales. I consent to the committee making this submission and my name public.

I began my teaching career on the northern beaches of Sydney in 1975. During a visit to a colleague's home in Clareville, our evening meal was interrupted by the calls of koalas in the trees above the house. Sadly, the koala population in Pittwater no longer exists and the wonder of seeing koalas in the environment adjacent to Sydney is becoming rare indeed. How sad for our grandchildren and their children if koalas no longer existed in the wild at all.

Urgent action is needed to ensure future generations can see these iconic species in the wild. Ensuring the survival of koalas is an issue which must be beyond politics. It requires visionary leadership to create lasting change. I therefore encourage the committee to work together to develop a cross-party consensus on genuine solutions to protect the future of our koalas.

Recently, the NSW Government recognised that koala populations are in steep decline and developed a strategy to begin to address this. Unfortunately, the strategy and current government policy fails to address the number one threat to koala populations - habitat loss and fragmentation.

Koalas cannot be saved unless we ensure their remaining habitat is protected and restored, but right now the opposite is occurring. In NSW areas of core koala habitat called 'koala hubs' have been mapped by the Office of Environment and Heritage but are still being cleared for logging, agriculture and infrastructure and the pace of the destruction is increasing. We also have historically low levels of additions to our national parks network under the current NSW government.

I'm asking that you prioritise solutions which prevent ongoing koala habitat destruction. This includes:

- immediately and permanently protecting all 'koala hubs' from clearing for agriculture, logging or development;
- investing in the future of koalas by expanding our national parks network, including creating the Great Koala National Park on the NSW mid-north coast;
- developing a transition plan to end the logging of native forests on public land;
- rejecting the Government's proposal to open up thousands of hectares of old-growth forests to logging on the NSW North Coast;
- urgently protecting koala habitat in the Sydney Basin from development; and
- ending woodchipping in southern NSW to allow koala populations to recover;

The NSW Parliament faces a choice: continue with business as usual and oversee the rapid decline and possible extinction of one of our iconic Australian mammals, or make urgent changes to protect vital habitat and restore our native forests.

I urge you to work together to save koalas for future generations.

Yours Sincerely,

Garth

Garth Newton