

Submission  
No 241

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

Dear Committee,

Please accept this submission to the inquiry into koala populations and habitat in NSW. My comments follow the terms of reference

a) The NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer notes in her recent report that there has been a significant decrease in koala populations. Locally on the mid north coast where I live reports on koala sightings are decreasing. In the Mt Yarrahappinni area occasional sightings have dwindled to very few and none in the last 10 years.

Koala habitat is under pressure in my local region. Prime koala habitat near Port Macquarie is fragmenting under the impact of rural living subdivision, road construction and koalas are suffering from the effects of vehicle strikes and dog attacks. In addition I understand that disease (Chlamydia) and heat wave conditions associated with climate change are also adding to the pressure on these animals.

Regarding resource availability, suitable areas of koala habitat have been declining in both area and in quality. The better quality land along the coast with more fertile soil providing better quality nutrition for the koalas is the land most affected by habitat loss and fragmentation

b) The Coastal Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals have recently changed in this area. Three specific changes are detrimental to the koala populations. Being able to harvest trees within 5 meters of a stream means in practice just about every tree is taken out of a valley. These trees are often the largest and most suitable koala habitat trees. Larger areas are now being harvested and the logged areas that I have visited are basically clear felled with very few isolated remnant trees left. These large bare areas are not suitable koala habitat and they won't recover their diversity quickly. The mid north coast eucalypt forests are known for their diversity of eucalypt species some of which are koala food trees. The new forestry system favours the regeneration of non koala feed trees like black butt instead of the grey gum, tallow wood and blue gum used by koalas.

Re Old growth remapping, my impression from reading the IFOA is that the remapping allows more harvesting of wet sclerophyll forest areas which had previously been mapped as rainforest and hence more loss of koala habitat.

In particular it is important that before and after independent scientific studies on the impact of new style forestry logging be carried out to properly inform the government of the day.

Overall I ask the committee to prioritize solutions that help prevent further habitat loss and degradation.

e) Re the environmental social and economic impacts of establishing new protected area like the proposed Great Koala National Park. Work done by Love and Sweeney (2015) help demonstrate the considerable economic benefits of nature based tourism and the associated jobs that it generates.

Koalas are important as an iconic Australian species but even more importantly they are a tangible reminder of a broader biodiversity decline. Hence I would urge the committee to work cooperatively as solutions such as arresting habitat decline and fragmentation are likely to help other less visible species which are also declining.

f) Paradoxically while increasing populations and changing rural land use are often associated with habitat loss and fragmentation, in my local area there are some small exceptions to this which may be relevant to the committee's deliberations. I live on ex banana land adjacent to a national park and state forest. Some of this land is used for farm forestry which has resulted in several thousand trees including many koala feed trees being planted over the last 40 years. In this case more potential koala habitat has been created. These areas have through Land care and NSW Envirotrust programs been linked up to corridors along ridges and creek lines providing for potential koala movement. Farmers can and should be encouraged to maintain and protect koala habitat on their properties

Yours sincerely

References Chief Scientist and Engineer NSW report into koala decline 2016

Love, and Sweeney 2015 referred to in the above report.