

Submission
No 254

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Parliament of NSW

Macquarie St. SYDNEY NSW. 2000

2nd August, 2019

Submission to the State Government Enquiry into Koala Populations and Habitat in NSW

I was very reluctant to write this submission because after doing much research in preparation for writing group submissions, my personal opinion is, just change the government.

The current NSW Government does not care about koalas. What they care about is window dressing, like the \$3m koala hospital soon to be built here in Port Stephens. That the situation has become so bad that we need a koala hospital for the survivors speaks volumes about this government's priorities.

The most important survival mechanism for koalas is habitat yet this government has introduced land clearing legislation, the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016, that is fundamentally flawed and deficient. Those sections of the Act should be repealed that can permit under the pretext of biodiversity conservation, the following:

- the removal of up to 99% of native vegetation on privately held lands
- an estimated 14 hectares of koala habitat removed each day
- omission of plans to address the known impacts of climate change on biodiversity
- the biodiversity banking and offsets scheme, which is heavily weighted to favour property developers
- the logging of old-growth and high-conservation value public forests

The other reason I know that this government doesn't care is the sad and sorry episode of the sale of Mambo Wetlands in 2016.

Property NSW, under the Department of Finance, Services and Innovation, received studies that told them the pocket of 5.6ha contained rare flora and fauna including the koala, that it was a known koala corridor and described as core koala habitat. The government received petitions, letters and emails from hundreds of residents about the sale. They were also petitioned by the local MP and Port Stephens Council, all saying **Don't sell this land.**

Of course the land was sold, and immediately after, the Parliamentary Secretary at the time, Scot MacDonald, said it had all been a mistake. And what did he do about the mistake? At the

end of 2016, six months after the sale, Port Stephens Council Officers arranged a meeting at the request of the new owner, with Mr MacDonald. The owner was looking for a way out of the sale but Mr MacDonald was unable to help.

- Unable to refer him to the Department of Environment that had just announced funding to buy back private land that was koala habitat.
- Unable to refer him to the Coastal Lands Protection Scheme that would eventually see a buy back realised in 2019.

So of course the owner then submitted a Development Application in late 2017. Catherine Cusack, MLC and a former Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter, visited Port Stephens and our local Landcare group in September 2017. She understood she said, that something had gone wrong in government process that would allow this sale to go ahead and she would certainly be looking into what had happened.

We don't know of anything Ms Cusack has done to ensure that this property was returned to public ownership or to change government legislation so that this did not occur again.

I certainly hope legislation is changed that has led to the destruction and sale of koala habitat in NSW.