

Submission
No 265

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

Name: Mr Callan Lawrence

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Partially
Confidential

2 August 2019

Re: Koala populations and habitat in New South Wales, with reference specifically to as a result of the Brandy Hill Quarry Extension Project

It is undeniable that Australia is facing a crisis of species extinction. A UN report released in 2019 *Nature's Dangerous Decline 'Unprecedented'; Species Extinction Rates 'Accelerating'* found Australia to have one of the world's worst records for the extinction and lack of protection for threatened fauna. More than 1700 species of flora and fauna were found to be threatened and endangered and koalas are among those we could lose to extinction in our lifetimes.

This is a crisis that needs drastic intervention from governments. The clearing of known koala habitats must end or one of our most iconic Australian symbols WILL become extinct and we will need to explain to our children how we failed to protect them.

Climatic changes, drought, and increased temperatures are pushing Koala populations east in search for cooler temperatures and habitat. Port Stephens is a known sanctuary for Koalas and even there they face a fragmented and urbanised environment. Koala habitats in Port Stephens are under attack and this should be stopped.

The proposed clearing of 45.8 hectares of koala habitat and breeding territory at Brandy Hill Quarry in Seaham, along with the proposed Kings Hill Housing Development, will have a detrimental effect to our Koala population. This is indicative of the incremental destruction of Koalas. A few hectares here, a few hectares there, and all of a sudden koala habitats have collapsed.

I am increasingly concerned by the lack of consideration and attention given to the direct loss of this 45.8 hectares of foraging and breeding koala habitat that will result if approval is given to the extension of the Brandy Hill Quarry in Seaham, NSW.

The Seaham and Brandy Hill area has regular sightings of koalas.

Given the increasingly disjunct and threatened koala populations across Australia, and the extremely threatened Eastern Population of Koalas, the loss of 45.8 hectares of koala habitat is likely to have a significant impact on the national population. Numerous small koala populations occur along the coast, but are increasingly threatened and separated as a result of urban and rural development, roads and other forms of development.

A report by R. W. Corkery & Co. addressed to Senior Planning Officer, Resource Assessments, Department of Planning and Environment, dated 7 February 2019, lists the following species as identified by Biosis Pty Ltd, as directly under threat by the Brandy Hill Quarry proposed extension.

- Koala
- Grey-headed Flying Fox
- Spotted-tailed Quoll
- Regent Honeyeater

- Swift Parrot

Biosis Pty Ltd finds:

“Within the locality, the clearing of 45.8 hectares of Koala habitat will adversely affect habitat critical to the survival of the species.”

The Report found that the Brandy Hill Quarry development and the clearing of Koala wilderness to be so significant, that it will impact koalas at a **"a national level"**.

The proposed mitigation measures to minimize the impact on these threatened native species seems insufficient. Mitigation measures include having an Ecologist or fauna rescuer to be present during vegetation clearing and the purchasing of 1191 Koala species credits under the NSW BioBanking Scheme. However, 'Koala Credits' have been criticized and debated as being ineffective and possibly an outdated scheme in the future.

Section 3 of the report, titled **Impacts**, finds the following:

Koala

Direct Impact:

45.8 Hectares of Habitat

Indirect Impact:

Potential loss of habitat due to erosion and sedimentation of adjoining native vegetations and waterways; increase in noise, vibration and light pollution on the boundaries of the adjoining vegetation.

Cumulative and consequential impacts:

Long term reduction and fragmentation of koala habitat within the locality.

Increase of vehicular traffic may lead to an increase in Koala collisions. Increased risk of pathogen exposure (Chlamydia, retrovirus) through transport of invertebrate vectors or livestock carrying the Chlamydia pathogens.

Discussion:

Based on these impacts and confirmed presence of Koala during targeted surveys (Biosis 2017) **it is likely that Koalas will be significantly impacted by the Project** and as such, a Referral under the provisions of the EPBC Act was submitted for this species.

I am rightly concerned over the expansion of the existing Brandy Hill Quarry and how it will involve:

- Direct impact and removal of:
 - o 48.62 hectares of native vegetation.
 - o 45.34 hectares of Swift Parrot foraging habitat.
 - o 44.12 hectares of Regent Honeyeater foraging habitat.
 - o 45.8 hectares of Koala habitat.

I urge you to give attention to this matter. The clearing of 45.8 hectares of Koala habitat will adversely affect habitat critical to the survival of the koala, and other significant threatened Australian species.

We need to stand together as a community, as a state, and as a nation to protect our Australian Koala before it's too late.

Kind Regards

Callan Lawrence