

**Submission
No 309**

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

Name: Mr John Pryde

Date Received: 30 July 2019

Submission to the NSW Inquiry into Koala Populations and Habitats

Dear Committee,

Please accept this letter as my submission to the Inquiry into Koala Populations and Habitats. Koalas in NSW reportedly face extinction within 30 years or so at current rates of population decline. I therefore urge the committee to recognize how critical their work is at this point in time. Please provide an accurate, comprehensive and representative voice for this much-loved, but poorly cared for iconic animal, by (1) identifying and reporting the full extent of the challenges it faces; and (2) taking the care and time to determine the best means of significantly improving the prospects for a thriving and sustainable existence of koalas in the wild in NSW, and importantly within a timeframe that will minimise significant further loss in the short term.

The competing claims on the koalas' habitat in meeting the needs of human habitation and livelihood must not be considered in passing as an unfortunate fact of life. We need to drop the antiquated attitude that humans have an a priori right, or even need, to tame and dominate nature. We know now that all of nature is connected, but not inexhaustible. To overlook this principle is not only so very unfortunate for that large part of life on our planet that lacks our organisation and apex power; it is also guaranteed to backfire upon us.

But sadly, that appears to have been happening consistently. We already have a depressing history of forest clearing for agriculture and industry, with unsustainable harvesting of native forests. Having cleared or modified approximately 80% of our state forests within not much more than 200 years, we have already gone too far and have earned as a nation an unenviable reputation for being near the top of developed nations in terms of land-clearing and species extinction rates.

I note that, with the introduction of the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016, the language has already changed, with a focus almost solely on minimisation of environmental impacts, with no longer consideration towards actually improving environmental outcomes if possible. It appears that the further we are going down the path of destruction of nature, the more comfortable we have become with the damage we have caused. This has to change, as we have clearly gone much too far already.

So, when it comes to looking at solutions to the currently terrible prospect for Koalas in the wild in NSW, can you please give proper consideration to the following. I accept that you may encounter virtually identically worded recommendations in other submissions to your Inquiry and make no apology for this. I have considered these carefully, and even though they are not my original thoughts and words, they have my full support as very worthwhile proposals:

1. Create the Great Koala National Park and implement other NPA reserve proposals presented to the Committee to protect koalas in north-east NSW—a region that will become more and more important as weather extremes make western areas less hospitable.
2. Protect 'koala hubs' (areas identified by the Office of Environment and Heritage as particularly important for koalas) immediately on all land tenures.
3. Identify and protect koala climate refugia as a matter of urgency.
4. End industrialised logging on public land that destroys habitat quality for koalas and ensure Private Native Forestry is genuinely low-impact and selective.
5. Protect known koala habitat from land clearing by identifying it as Category 2-sensitive land or Areas of Outstanding Biodiversity Value, and urgently require local governments to complete the mapping of koala habitat for holistic protection.

6. Strengthen SEPP 44 (koala habitat protection) to ensure koala habitat is not destroyed by urban development and;
7. Create a new national park in south-west Sydney to ensure rapid development does not come at the cost of koalas.

If we can implement these steps koalas stand a good chance of surviving in NSW. If we continue with business as usual, koalas will continue to die and to slide towards extinction. **I urge you to secure the future of koalas by taking decisive action to protect habitat.**

Yours sincerely,
John Pryde