

**Submission
No 311**

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

Name: Mr Brent Hely

Date Received: 2 August 2019

Submission to the Upper House inquiry into koala populations and habitat in New South Wales

Dear Committee,

Please accept this letter as my 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 am grateful to have a platform to share my deep concern for the future of Koala in NSW and in particular Northern NSW, where I have lived and worked for the past 35 years. For the past 25 years I have been undertaking and involved with ecological restoration projects within our region. Therefore, I also wish to share a vision of how we can alter this trajectory and be the people who do not allow this fate to become the Koala (Dunggirr), one of Australia's most most iconic creatures.

When I first moved to the north coast in 1984 there was still healthy Koala populations in the Toormina, Boambee and Korora areas. But today those local Koala populations have dwindled, impacted by:

- clearing of habitat for residential and industrial developments (still ongoing e.g. Lot 2 Sawtell Rd currently before L & E Court)
- Clearing of habitat for agriculture (still ongoing e.g. hundreds of hectares lost to clearing for Blueberry Farms 2012-2019) NSW land clearing laws saw a surge in clearing rates (ironically over supply is now occurring and profitability is dropping for growers...)
- Forestry mismanagement- clear-felling of high-quality koala habitat (RFA review opens up more Koala habitat to logging.)
- habitat dissected by roads without provision of suitable fauna crossings leading to many mortalities, sometimes eventually entire sub populations.
- Increasing dog ownership resulting in increasing mortalities from dog attack (as they move through a landscape where there may be no trees present)

However, there are a series of strategic actions we can take, to not only avoid functional extinction but to increase Koala populations back to sustainable levels.

For the past 25 years I have put my heart and soul into restoring ecosystems within our region, including Koala Habitat. We are currently working on a corridor project within Coffs Harbour in a series of council reserves to increase connectivity allowing Koala to move through the landscape. They are there, quite literally, just hanging in there. We urgently need to address the threats and take urgent action before these populations slip out of the realm of genetic viability. PLEASE SUPPORT KOALA by considering the following:

- Immediate moratorium on all clearing of native vegetation on public or private land that contains local Koala food trees. We are after all in a climate emergency facing an extinction crisis.
 - 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 under the RFA review. The original quotas developed were fraudulent ie grossly knowingly OVERESTIMATED amount of timber present
 - Ruling out burning our native forests for electricity

- **Support councils Like Coffs Harbour City Council when they have to use rate payer's money to try to prevent developers using the Land and Environment Court to get around council Koala Habitat Protection regulations**
- Formal review of fauna crossing on all highways and main roads that dissect Koala habitat. Install appropriate fauna crossings for Koala (and other Arboreal species).
- Review of Companion Animals act to stem amount of dog attacks in habitat areas
- Restoration of habitat linkages to connect habitat that has become isolated through inappropriate development or land clearing
- 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.
 - Provision of jobs through restoration and land management
 - Huge eco-tourism potential (e.g. Coffs Harbour is already a well-known mountain bike destination and the wider area has many wilderness walks)
 - Coffs Council reserve system can also provide similar benefits

Finally, I have witnessed firsthand that to increase any native fauna population the ONE THING we need to do is protect or expand their habitat, its as simple as that. Each afternoon when I get home from work, I sit on my verandah amongst trees we only planted 15 years ago. Once an old banana farm cleared a century ago, now teaming with life... Lyrebirds, Noisy Pittas, Regent Bowerbirds, Wompoo Fruit Doves, Platypus , Echidna etc...I am yet to see a Koala back here in Korora (years ago they disappeared) but we have planted all their favourite trees, like Tallowood, White Mahogany, Grey Gum and one day my dream will come true. PLEASE HELP. Future generations will thank you for it.

Kind Regards,

Brent Hely

1 August 2019

Photo of Koala at our work site on Tree Fern Creek Coffs Harbour...please don't let her down

