

**Submission  
No 5**

**INQUIRY INTO LOCAL LAND SERVICES AMENDMENT  
(MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2020**

**Organisation:** Bangalow Koalas

**Date Received:** 4 February 2021

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## Submission on Local Land Services Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2020

To: [PortfolioCommittee7@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:PortfolioCommittee7@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

This submission is being made on behalf of Bangalow Koalas, a registered environmental organisation and charity which became active in 2016 to help protect the local koala population. Since that time we have expanded our operations with our long-term goal being to create a koala / wildlife corridor that links habitat from Byron Bay west to Tenterfield and from the Queensland border down to Grafton so koalas can move safely through the landscape. We are well on our way to achieving this.

We have grave concerns about the changes proposed through the Local Land Services Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2020 and the resultant impacts on koalas and other wildlife. Koalas in NSW are struggling to survive, with loss of habitat being the critical factor. Without effective protection to immediately stop the current excessive land clearing the koala will not survive in the wild into the future. Protection of existing habitat and creation and expansion of koala habitat has become even more urgent following the devastating fires in 2019/2020 which destroyed huge tracts of land and killed many koalas. The issues associated with climate change are exacerbating the problems further, with koalas suffering during periods of drought and intense heat, which are likely to become more frequent and extreme in the future. We are therefore extremely alarmed at the proposed changes which represent a huge backwards step in koala conservation, and will actually facilitate the koala's demise by enabling even more habitat destruction.

To date neither the 1994 Koala SEPP nor the 2019 Koala SEPP have been effective in protecting koalas or their habitat. There has been a massive increase in logging and land-clearing since the NSW government repealed the native vegetation laws in 2016, with over 37,000 hectares approved for clearing in 2018-19, almost 13 times the annual average rate prior to those changes. The proposed changes to the LLS Act will lead to another massive increase in land clearing due to the broad scope given by introducing the concept of 'allowable activity land' and 'allowable activities' that can be carried out without any approval or other authority.

'Allowable activity land' includes private native forestry and agricultural land, both of which provide important habitats for koalas. Removing the requirement for development consent in relation to private native forestry and doubling the maximum duration of private native forestry plans to 30 years, when the vast majority of koalas occur on private land, is astounding. Isolated paddock trees are extremely important features in agricultural landscapes in this area, and their removal will have a significant impact on the local koala populations.

It seems clear that the objectives of the LLS Amendment (Misc) Bill 2020 are to remove protection from large landholdings, facilitate widespread habitat destruction to appease the farming and forestry industries and remove existing protections from koalas and koala habitat. The impacts from the proposed changes will be significantly detrimental to koalas, and other wildlife, and speed their current downward trajectory toward extinction.

For a government that widely publicises its intention to not only ensure the survival of the koala in the wild, but to double its population, these amendments are completely incomprehensible.

If the government is serious about protecting the koala in the wild into the future it needs to:

- put in urgent measures to stop the widespread habitat destruction, not facilitate further destruction;

- identify strategic suitable habitats to protect for koalas, with safe linking habitats between;
- ensure protected areas include potentially suitable habitat for koalas, even if they are not currently present, so there are safe areas for them to move into in the future with a changing climate;
- provide stronger incentives for landholders to protect koala habitat on their land and make and enforce stronger penalties for illegal land clearing;
- make significant changes to the 2020 Koala Habitat Protection SEPP to reinstate the full tree lists; revise the definition of potential koala habitat; remove the 1ha trigger; and remove the exemption for Forestry Land. The current two step assessment process means that many areas of suitable habitat which actually support koalas would not currently qualify as 'potential koala habitat', so no provisions in the SEPP would apply; and
- ensure environmental and planning legislation and policy are strong enough to enable local councils to effectively protect koala habitat and koalas within their local areas, and that they have the resources available to carry out monitoring and compliance visits and impose penalties for any breaches.

Yours sincerely,

**Linda Sparrow**

**President**

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