

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 25 February 2021

Partially
Confidential

Concerns relating to the Koala SEPP Enquiry

As the operators of an 822 hectare farming and grazing enterprise in Northern NSW we have some concerns relating to the Koala SEPP.

Most of our land is run as an extensive grazing operation relying on native pastures, large paddocks, farm roads and man-made watering points. Much of our land has extensive timber stands utilised as shade, shelter and habitat for domestic and native animals alike. There is also an understory of native shrubs and forbs – the whole supporting a diverse animal and insect population. The land has always been run in an environmentally friendly and aware fashion. In the past this has included judiciously targeted thinning of very thick regrowth to both stimulate sound timber stands and maintain bio-diversity. Access roads are essential to manage our country. If we can no longer carry out these necessary management activities, due to restrictions brought about by the Koala SEPP, the land will quickly deteriorate into an impenetrable forest and a haven for feral animals such as feral cats, dogs, deer, goats and pigs. Noxious weeds will become rampant. We must further develop and maintain our farm tracks as fire trails and access trails to control feral animals, treat noxious weed invasion and maintain fences and water supplies. These same water supplies also ensure the survival of our native species, as demonstrated during the most recent drought as well as the many previous droughts.

In the past 59 years of ownership by our family, there has not been a single Koala sighted on this land. In the original SEPP maps every tree of reasonable size on the property was highlighted as a potential Koala tree. This included introduced ornamentals such as Jacarandas in our house garden. This is simply ridiculous!

Under our stewardship we have seen the re-emergence of many native species of flora and fauna that originally inhabited our land; which we actively encourage and assist by proactive management. Should Koala's arrive they would be most welcome. Our understanding is however, that this has never been Koala habitat as the variety of trees are not conducive to Koala habitation. Our pro-active approach to environmental conservation is underpinned already by the LLS Act and the Biodiversity Act. Rural land does not need another policy/act under which to operate, when in reality it is only going to overlay those existing Acts. Daily conservation by progressive farmers already exists and is fundamental to sustainability. In our opinion, where this type of legislation is necessary is where the unfettered housing estate developments are clear felling known Koala habitat every day.

As private landholders we, like most of our contemporaries across NSW actively engage in conservation activities every day. To conserve our land and our biodiversity is a fundamental tenet of successful and sustainable farming operations. Whether it is healthy stands of timber, ground cover, soil carbon, diverse animal, plant and insect populations; all contribute to sustainable agriculture and a healthy environment. Rather than locking up productive land, a far more proactive approach would be to draw on the knowledge and experience of rural land holders, engaging with them in an educative and incentive-based scheme to support not only Koalas, but all native flora and fauna.