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Koala Strategy Submissions
PO Box A290
Sydney South NSW 1232

Re: SUBMISSION TO NSW KOALA STRATEGY

This submission to the NSW Koala Strategy is submitted on behalf of Koppers.

Koppers Wood Products Pty Ltd (Koppers) is part of a global company with a head office based in Pittsburgh, USA, listed on the New York stock exchange. (KOP)

In Australia Koppers is a long-established supplier of CCA treated timber poles used for overhead electricity and communication lines. Hardwood poles supplied from our Grafton pole treatment plant are distributed across Australia and near Pacific Nations to carry power to our industries, farms and homes.

Native regrowth forest on State Forest and private land along the NSW coast and hinterland is the pre-eminent source of durable hardwood poles in Australia and why all NSW hardwood pole producers are located on the NSW North Coast. Alternate hardwood pole sources such as plantations can supplement current pole supply from native regrowth forest but are not of sufficient scale, size or quality to replace this important pole resource.

Koppers is a regional employer in Grafton with our pole supply catchment extending to rural employment for forest harvest contractors, machinery workers and transport operators. Beginning in regrowth native forest, Koppers pole supply chain provides economic benefits to rural landholders to invest in forest management and silviculture for continuing sustainable timber supply. Only about 10% of public native forests are available to provide for the timber needs of the State so the large fragmented PNF estate has an important socio-economic role in sustaining timber dependent communities.

Koppers supports a coordinated scientific and evidence-based approach to koala management including population assessment and managing issues that threaten them. Forest operations are not a key threatening process to Koala populations in NSW. Selective timber harvesting is a highly regulated and dispersed activity in time and space across the forest landscape where Koala's may occur. Timber harvesting in NSW can only occur with an approved Private Native Forest – Property Vegetation Plans on private land or a multiagency approved harvest plan on State Forest and must comply with forest practice codes for sustainable timber production and protection of biodiversity and habitat. Native forestry as practiced in NSW results in a temporary modification of the forest and is not a form of land use change. Whether for production or habitat protection maintaining healthy forests is a vital common interest to the timber industry and to koalas. There is evidence from DPI studies that koalas prefer regrowth forest and continue to thrive in modified forests and close to urban landscapes.

The area of National Parks along the NSW east coast and hinterland has vastly increased in recent years and during the same time Koala populations have reportedly declined. Creating

more conservation areas with a “lock up and leave it” management approach will not arrest koala decline. Active and adaptive forest management across all tenures is fundamentally important to maintain healthy forests in the short and long term for production and to maintain suitable habitat and opportunity for koalas and other species. Included among this is the protection of the environment from wildfire, pests and disease managed on a large scale across tenures and the forest landscape mosaic.

Fire is a natural phenomenon and native hardwood forests are dynamic fire-adapted ecosystems. Eucalypt forest are among the highest terrestrial biomass producers of any vegetation systems in the world and dangerously high levels of elevated litter can build up in less than 5 years from a past disturbance event. High fuel levels and its coincidence with extreme weather can lead to dangerous fire conditions each year. We have witnessed “mega fires” in recent years that have been beyond the control of impressive fire suppression resources amassed to stop them at great danger and cost. The impact of intense fast moving wildfire is catastrophic and threaten koalas individually and at a population level. At a time of increasing extreme and variable fire weather more controlled strategic hazard reduction burning under appropriate conditions across the forest landscape should be implemented to render the environment safer for koala, a wide range of flora and fauna as well and the human population that live and work in the area.

Fire can also be a tool to reduce the buildup of weeds choking large tracts of forest on the North Coast including lantana that occurs in impenetrable thickets inhibiting movement through the forest. Lantana is an invasive weed and implicated with habitat loss through the dynamics of BMAD over very wide areas.

A holistic approach to koala management across the landscape may require changing conservation policies that restrict regular low intensity forest burning leading to a build-up of unsafe forest fuel levels. Forestry and modified forest practices that protect koala habitat in the short and longer term are important to maintaining koala populations. An active and adaptive approach to forest and fire management is a key aspect of any viable solution to koala welfare.

Koppers fully supports the submission submitted by Timber NSW to the NSW Koala Strategy and in response to the Review of SEPP 44 Koala Habitat Protection.

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