



THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LTD.

Friday 3rd March, 2017

Koala Strategy Submissions
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Sydney South NSW 1232

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Dear Sir/Madam,

Submission on the NSW Government Koala Strategy, the review of the Saving our Species Strategy and also the State Environmental Planning Policy 44 on koala habitat protection

The driver of koala population decline is habitat fragmentation which isolates populations and increases risk of injury from contact with cats, dogs and motor vehicles, inbreeding and population stress, and koala infertility through chlamydia. Habitat fragmentation and loss are the key drivers of most wildlife decline.

The drivers of koala habitat fragmentation are:

- Intensification of native forest logging in state forests and limited enforcement of logging prescriptions that protect habitat, including for koala habitat;
- Heavy, poorly-regulated logging under the Private Native Forestry (PNF) code, with no effective protection of koala habitat within the code;
- Acceleration of land clearing following the repeal of the Native Vegetation Act, 2003;
- Coastal urban expansion and development;
- Major infrastructure development through koala habitat, such as clearing for highways and powerline;
- The abandonment of National Park reservation and wilderness declaration in NSW;
- Increased sale and fragmentation of Crown Land; and
- Weak protections of koala habitat under the State Environmental Planning Policy 44 arising in part from confusion by those responsible for development control over what is core koala habitat.

What must be done

To stop loss of koala populations all the above drivers of habitat fragmentation must be reversed through an effective whole of government Koala Strategy that includes the following elements:

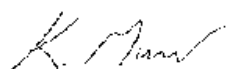
- Precise and accurate identification and mapping as 'core koala habitat' all areas with more than 15% of tree cover being koala feed trees in the forests and woodlands of NSW;
- Effective enforcement of logging prescriptions for state forests, including pre-logging fauna surveys by qualified experts, to ensure core koala habitat and linking wildlife corridors are not logged;
- Provide a further tranche of \$10 million dollars to the recurrent acquisition budget of the National Parks and Wildlife Service for the public acquisition of core koala habitat areas;
- An accelerated wilderness declaration and national park reservation program for NSW – (the first priority in this program should be to implement the 'Blueprint for a comprehensive reserve system for koalas (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) on the North Coast of New South Wales' within the next two years);
- Exclusion of core koala habitat under PNF logging and land clearing codes, such as the equity code, to prevent private land logging and clearing that would otherwise be unfair to koalas; and
- Through a much strengthened State Environmental Planning Policy 44, ban urban and industrial expansion in core koala habitat and in broad wildlife corridor links identified and mapped between koala habitat areas so that koalas can effectively migrate between koala populations and in response to climate change.

The above provisions will ensure koala habitat protection throughout NSW, particularly large and mature koala feed and habitat trees in core areas. In addition, wildlife corridors between these core areas must be protected to allow genetic exchange between koala populations and minimise the threats of motor traffic, cats and dogs on koala populations.

The Colong Foundation points out that well managed wilderness areas remove the threats of motorised transport and limits feral animal predation to koalas and other wildlife. Wilderness areas must be linked through protection of koala habitat and wildlife corridors on private lands to reverse habitat fragmentation.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely,



Keith Muir
Director
The Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd