

The Hon Minister Upton  
Minister for the Environment and Heritage NSW

Dear Minister Upton and Office of Environment and Heritage,

I write as a rural resident of NE NSW living close to wild koalas in the state forests of NSW for 35 years. We cannot continue to ignore the extinction emergency facing NSW. Someone has to make the hard decisions now to ensure the survival of the koala and its habitat. Multiple threats to native vegetation, forest biodiversity and the survival of our threatened species must be addressed to conserve healthy ecosystem services.

The hardwood eucalypt forests of the Great Dividing Range have been subjected to logging for many decades and in recent times (1980-2016) the scale of industrial logging has increased, impacting the local koala populations with steep declines in numbers since the 1980's and 90's.

Changes within the timber industry have also impacted native forest habitats, with the size of trees cut for mills getting smaller and harvest cycles of 7-12 years common in many compartments. This logging regime has been devastating for local koala populations because their preferred trees are now also the same size trees targeted for timber mills.

A shrinking timber resource has put pressure on NSW forestry corporation to select ALL preferred koala feed and habitat trees and this has led to massive declines in local wild koalas. In a number of NSW harvest operations FC NSW has breached regulations by failing to search for koalas.

The same demand driven situation exists within the private native forestry (PNF) sector, which has even less incentive to search for threatened species ahead of logging, leaving little hope for wild koalas to survive or time to rebuild core habitat or maintain ideal forest structure.

The weakening of vegetation laws could be a disaster for biodiversity in NSW as the impacts of global warming across our farming sector erode the remains of healthy ecosystems in the rush to address global food security and expand agricultural outputs.

We must accept that development at any cost is no longer an option and create laws that value nature above human occupation and development. The NSW urban footprint has increased habitat loss, fatal injury and disease and all but wiped out coastal koala populations who are now in danger of extinction across their range. Stronger planning laws, implementation of threatened species action plans and community education is vital to protecting our threatened wildlife.

I am calling on you to ensure our wild koalas are protected into the future.

- The key to the survival of any species is protection of its habitat. I urge you to: implement stronger measures to save critical koala habitat in NSW including: ending logging of native forest on public land;
- improving protection of koala habitat in private native forestry operations;
- ensure urban development and infrastructure does not wipe out koala habitat, and
- reverse the recent changes that have eroded our land-clearing protections.
- and to recognise and support the koala rehabilitation groups and the veterinarians who work with them to deal with the everyday consequences of these poor policies on koalas.

NSW needs strong environmental leadership and a commitment to implementation of actions to conserve koala habitat across all land tenures with legislation needed to enforce retention and regeneration of preferred tree species.

Conservation and regeneration of mature forest habitat will also benefit the 1000 other threatened species in NSW like gliders, glossy black cockatoos, frogs, macropods and all the hollow dwelling species who rely on mature aged trees for homes and nesting.

The koala really is the 'canary in the coal mine' when conserving healthy native forest habitat. Please take meaningful action to give koalas a fighting chance into the future.

kind regards,

Sincerely,

Meredith Stanton