

I worked with the Forestry for 38 years. We kept logging tracks open, we used various hazard reduction methods, including controlled burning. Back then the forests were well maintained and there were numerous koalas. Then a lot of the land was turned into national parks. There are now over 7 million hectares of National Parks and reserves in NSW covering the full range of habitat types, in addition there is also 2 million hectares of sustainably managed state forest, with less than ½ of that available for timber supply. Most National Parks have gone from healthy Koala habitat environments to un kept, un maintained fire hazards full of weeds, rubbish, vines, thick undergrowth, feral animals etc.

The SEPP 44 Koala habitat protection review states that the reason for the decline in numbers is land clearing, disturbance of habitat, attacks by dogs and fatalities on the road. But nowhere does it say that the satellite imagery used to measure canopy loss, showed that the greatest canopy loss in NSW was caused by wild fires in the National Parks and reserves. Fire has always played an important role in keeping rubbish and undergrowth under control but more regular controlled maintenance is required to reduce the impact and consistency of large wild fires.

The chief scientists and engineers report undertaken by the department of industry has revealed that koalas are thriving in regrowth state forest and privately owned land, they indeed seem to be doing better than those living in conservation reserves. Land owners have maintained great koala habitats without government regulations or interference imposed on them, and they will continue to do this (there are more koalas sighting's now than ever but most land owners will not admit to having koalas on their properties as they are worried about the restrictions that would be placed on them). The government would be better looking at why koalas are becoming endangered and why most sightings are on private property and not in the National parks.

The proposed changes to broaden the definition of koala habitat to include a list of 65 trees and any areas where Koalas are present, doesn't make sense, as Koalas prefer only a small number of feed trees, and the pittance that the government offers for off sets is nothing compared to its value. Why doesn't the government look after the public lands without shifting the cost and responsibility to the land owners? This will impact on our PNF's and our RAMA's.

Regards Jim O' Neill