

The Hon Minister Upton
Minister for the Environment and Heritage NSW

Dear Minister Upton and Office of Environment and Heritage,

I recently spoke to several experts in the field of koala management and ecology and the koala is indeed in dire straits. I am calling on you to ensure koalas are protected into the future, so that the world's favourite animal is not lost from NSW. NPWS estimates if we do not act to preserve habitat in a meaningful way, the koalas will become extinct in NSW by 2055. This cannot happen. Also, of the 1400 species that are threatened or endangered, 1100 of these share habitat with koalas.

- 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; but also, to renegotiate the terms of habitat: 'core' habitat is no longer enough, they need connecting habitat as well, which will also help those 1100 other species;
- improving protection of koala habitat in private native forestry operations; in fact, I support National Parks and Wildlife's plan to turn state forests into national parks to create a safe and undisturbed, continuous habitat for koalas across NSW;
- ensure urban development and infrastructure does not wipe out koala habitat, by attending to the planning laws and encouraging ACTUAL ecologically sensitive development - bulldozer suburbs are not the answer to our housing needs and the 20 years it takes for trees to grow to the maturity required by a koala is the amount of time it takes for a koala population to vanish;
- reverse the recent changes that have eroded our land-clearing protections. These in particular have far reaching effects, with fragile populations of koalas losing valuable habitat and lone trees that help keep them moving through and living in an area, and additionally these new laws (which I protested) are adding further stress to habitats and farm land by allowing the full scale introduction of weeds that cost millions of dollars and make any regeneration work much more costly and difficult. I live in the Northern Rivers and this is a massive problem for us, weeds in the 100s of varieties and most of them out of control and difficult to eradicate, lantana in eucalypt forest prevents koalas from accessing trees too and weed suppress natural regeneration that would ordinarily occur;
- 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. In Lismore the Friends of the Koala is under great stress financially and their work is often simply to humanely put koalas to death because of the stressors already affecting the koala population. Also: local councils like Lismore City Council are working to protect koalas and using rate payers' money and grants to do so; this work becomes futile if it is not supported at a state level. We support the council's initiative to protect and promote koala populations in the area and want our local area to be able to implement the strategies effectively. They are working and need to continue in order to create a strong, resilient koala population.

I urge you to take meaningful action to save this beloved, iconic species, and all those other species that are also critically endangered and share its habitat. It shocks and saddens me immensely to know that so many species are under threat or even already vanished, and when I was a child in the 70s they were much more plentiful. We are losing so much, and really, the money is not worth it. I will never vote for this.

Sincerely,

Katinka Smit