

I enthusiastically support the development and implementation of a strategy to protect our koalas. I am deeply concerned that koalas are in crisis and would really like to see integrated, unified action taken across all government levels and agencies.

I would like all potential large, well-connected habitat areas (not just areas where we currently have data) reserved for the protection of koalas NOW. Biodiversity conservation, land clearing and Forestry Corporation's ecologically unsustainable practices must be promptly brought into line with maximum protections for this iconic species and its habitat.

A call for submissions is not necessary to find out that the people of NSW care deeply about the koala and that the koala is one of the most treasured animals on the planet. It is the duty of Government to protect our natural heritage. Other things can be replaced, but, once eroded, this rich beauty and fragile ecosystem is lost forever. We only have one chance. Do not let this tragedy occur on your watch.

All the chief scientist & engineer's report recommendations must be adopted. Moreover, for a unified approach to be effective, Government and agencies need to be working from the one comprehensive map. Mapping and gathering new information is welcome, but we know the koala is in crisis now and we want action to save it now.

Meanwhile, the mapping needs to be not just of known populations, not just areas where we currently have data, which is an adventitious, hit-and-miss approach to take, likely to exclude many existing but unrecorded and remote populations; but it must be of *all potential habitat*. Any suitable area needs protection.

The best way to protect koalas is a tried and tested one. The scientists who identified the crisis ecoregion problem also identified the solution: large, well-connected protected areas. Only by protecting and connecting remaining koala habitat can the government enact meaningful conservation. Everything else is tinkering round the edges. Large and well-managed protected areas remain the single most effective tool to conserving biodiversity. The Great Koala National Park, the key part of a broader koala reserve plan, is the best chance for koalas to have a secure future in NSW.

And only by demonstrating that it can effectively protect koalas can we have any confidence that the government can protect the rest of Australia's extraordinary wildlife that doesn't share the koala's high profile.

We must address the main threats to koalas: habitat loss from land clearing and native forest logging. We must rectify the paradox that is the government wanting to save the koala but facilitating its demise with other policies.

For decades the public has subsidised native forest logging that is killing our wildlife, destroying forests and releasing carbon. The Regional Forest Agreements that are leading to habitat carnage are sickeningly absurd and must not be renewed.

Forestry must become sustainable with plantations. Instead ForestryCorp continually breaches rules and logs areas in shorter and shorter harvest times. In two State Forest compartments near where I live, there have been 106 official koala sightings; yet these compartments are due to be logged. The surrounding compartments have already been heavily logged, so if the koalas are not killed during the felling, they will have nowhere to go.

We the public have paid \$85 million over three years for logging; whereas nature-based tourism earns \$14 billion in a year. 80% of international visitors come to see nature and tourism is the largest employer in regional areas. No strategic koala plan makes sense while we allow this costly and criminal habitat destruction to continue. We must let our forests grow old: we cannot continue to allow clear felling or the killing of trees that are hundreds of years old and provide homes for koalas and other wildlife, trees that have been here since before the white man ever even thought of the great south land.

Those of us who care about nature, recognise the threat of climate change and believe in a sustainable future for regional communities can no longer stand by and watch this happen. 32% of Australia's entire emission reduction target could be met if we stopped logging public forests in NSW. Climate change mitigation will in turn help reduce the bushfires, droughts and extreme weather events that take such a toll on the helpless koala and its home.

To ensure koalas are protected into the future, so that the world's favourite animal is not lost from NSW, we need to end native forest logging on public land altogether.

We need to implement stronger measures to save koala habitat, including improving protection of koala habitat in private native forestry, ensuring urban development does not wipe out koala habitat and reversing the recent changes to our land-clearing protections.

Under the government's new land-clearing laws, WWF estimates we could see 2 million ha of koala habitat lost via the 'Equity Code'. The \$10 million earmarked to purchase koala habitat as part of the government's strategy will buy only 6,000ha of land on 2015 prices. Ten farmers applying the Equity Code could clear this in a single year.

I welcome government initiatives to encourage private land holders to maintain forest and bush and provide incentives not to clear vegetation. On my land I have planted a wildlife corridor of more than a thousand trees as part of a link between our creek and Yarriabini National Park.

Let this plan address the root causes that are wiping out koalas. If we continue with our current regimen of profligate habitat destruction, the iconic and adorable koala could be extinct in our children's lifetime. Let's not leave a desert as our legacy.

I urge you to take meaningful action to save this beloved species and make this plan a real opportunity to guarantee its future.

Mary Forbes