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Dear Madam, I have been employed as a Park Ranger in New South Wales since 1978. During that time I have worked in a number of national parks including Kosciuszko, Ku-ring-gai Chase and for the past 20 years in the Northern Rivers Region. I have a very good knowledge of natural resource management including extensive experience in the management and protection of a range of threatened species. I have also volunteered for Friends of the Koala in Lismore and attended a number of seminars with regards Koala conservation. I do believe that the Koala is a particularly important and iconic Australian animal – one that we should make every effort to protect and conserve for the future. In this respect I do believe that it is particularly important that an independent review into the decline of Koala populations in NSW be conducted. As a park ranger in northern New South Wales I have also become very aware of Eucalypt dieback, in particular dieback associated with over-prolific psyllids and Bell Miners; often referred to as Bell Miner Dieback or Bell Miner Associated Dieback (BMAD). For the past 15 years I have been a member of a multi-agency working group with the aim of assessing the risk of BMAD and possible management or ameliorative responses. The working group has been very active, raising the profile of BMAD and also in having the problem listed as a Key Threatening Process in NSW. BMAD occurs over much of the eastern Australian seaboard between Brisbane and Melbourne. It has a devastating impact on a wide range of Eucalypt species essentially causing widespread tree death with long term negative consequences for the affected areas. The threat to Koala's and a wide range of other native species is very obvious. In the northern Rivers Region BMAD affects thousands of hectares of native forest, across national parks, state forests and on private lands. BMAD currently affects forest around Brisbane, the Blue Mountains, the NSW central and south coast and parts of eastern Victoria. At the moment there is no known ameliorative response for BMAD affected forest. The BMAD working group has conducted a number of trials but none, apart perhaps for very extensive and intensive understorey modification appear promising. There is no short or even medium term solutions. I am concerned that the Chief Scientist December 2016 report does not appear to acknowledge the threat posed to Koala populations as a result of BMAD. To my mind it is having a very serious impact on areas in national parks and state forests that might otherwise be thought to be providing core (and secure) areas for Koala conservation. I have also over the past 10 years observed another form of Eucalypt dieback in the Northern Rivers not related to BMAD, but most likely due to insect attack. Large areas of the Northern Rivers particularly river flats and valley bottoms are experiencing widespread tree decline and death. A wide range of Eucalypt species are affected including Red Gums, Tallowwoods, Bloodwoods, Ironbarks and Grey Gums. I have observed this decline over a large area between Lismore and Tabulam (east - west) and Beaudesert and Grafton (north – south). This dieback affects many thousands of hectares causing trees to be seriously defoliated often resulting in death. The impact occurs most commonly over cleared or partially cleared grazing country that I would expect provides important secondary habitat for Koalas. These areas also likely provide essential connectivity between better forested habitats. Similar rural Eucalypt decline is occurring in the New England and Cooma-Monaro regions of NSW. Again I believe that this further impact or loss of habitat for Koalas needs to be taken into account in any consideration of threats to Koala conservation in NSW. The Koala is an iconic species perhaps only matched in Australian terms by the Kangaroo. In my lifetime I have seen the Koala population seriously decline and even disappear across parts of its range. It is I believe on the brink of extinction, the consequences of which would be quite devastating. I can only

commend the urgent need to try and arrest this most serious threat and only hope that my small contribution might have some positive effect. Yours sincerely, Stephen King 28th February, 2017

Your name / name of organisation:

Stephen King

Postcode

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No Answer

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████████████████████

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