



SAWMILLERS - HARDWOOD FLOORING SPECIALISTS

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Koala Strategy Submissions
Koala.strategy@environment.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

I am making this submission on behalf of J. Notaras & Sons Pty Ltd.

WE are a privately owned, local Timber Manufacturing Business in Grafton. The Business commenced in 1952 and is a large employer in our area.

Reading through the Chief Scientist and Engineer report to the Minister, some highlighted points as to problem areas listed were:

It is clear that the population of koalas are not known and a programme needs to be put in place to gather the information. This process needs to be carried out first to establish the real facts. To highlight this, it was just announced by the Environment Minister; Gabrielle Upton; (26.2.17) that more than 3,000 koalas were mapped, making this the largest known koala population in the Southern Highlands.

Perhaps there are other koala populations not yet mapped as well. This is vital to know these figures initially, before any other plans can be made, otherwise leading to incorrect assumptions and causing incorrect decision to be made.

The clear enemy of koalas are:

- Wild dogs.
- Clearing areas for urban spread; new residential estates; roads.
- Road kills.
- Wild Fires.

The report also mentions making more National Parks as a remedy.

I disagree with this, if the koala numbers are in fact decreasing, then what did the establishment of additional National Parks by the then Premier Bob Carr do for them. This was over a million hectares in the late 1990 and early 2000s. Did these areas become more populated with Koalas? If not, than perhaps the proposal of even more National Parks is not the answer. If an area is to be designated for a koala park, then make it an existing National Park, not take more productive areas and turn them into National Parks.

If all National Parks cannot be managed, than perhaps set up a designated area within an existing National Park and concentrate on Fire Management, removing pest animals such as wild dogs and cleaning up weeds.

National Parks cannot be accessed by firefighters as fire trails that existed when it was a forestry estate, were closed or not maintained therefore when fires occur they cannot be easily accessed. A picture comes to mind in a wild fire event some years ago, when a koala was drinking water from a fire fighters' water bottle, how many koalas were lost???

Currently there are over seven million hectares of national park and reserves in NSW covering the full range of koala habitat types. In addition there are vast tracks of protected Crown timber lands and over two million hectares of sustainably managed state forest of which less than 1 million hectares is available for timber supply. With only ten per cent of public native forests available to provide for the State's growing hardwood timber needs, private native forests have an important social-economic role to play.

Selective timber harvesting of private native forests (PNF) is a widespread but highly controlled activity that operates across the NSW koala's home range. Selective timber harvesting and koala populations have successfully co-existed for over 100 years with no documented evidence of adverse impacts. I am concerned that the proposed changes to SEPP 44 may provide an opportunity for those politically motivated opponents of the industry to reduce access to private native forests without any sound scientific bases. The opportunists will likely focus on regrowth forests that have a proven track record serving as koala habitat and a source of renewable timbers supply.

Wild dogs and weeds thrive in unmanaged national parks as "everything" is protected. I don't mean to criticise National Parks, as some of the preserved areas are spectacular, and need to be preserved, however left unmanaged with the pest problems we now have, (which were not as prevalent on days gone by) is not good practice.

When vast areas are cleared for urban development and roads, large tracks of timbered land is lost. Perhaps in large developments there should be native corridors left.

When there is so much evidence of the "enemy to koalas", even though not tabled at the Community information sessions; in the media it always comes back to logging and the timber industry instead of the factual information of pests, fires and urban and road clearing.

Forest Corporation has clear guide lines of protection of koalas, and since there is selective logging in native forests, the koala habitat is not taken away. Selective logging causes natural regrowth which koalas thrive in.

Recent (unpublished) research undertaken by the Department of Industry – Lands (briefly mentioned in the Chief Scientist & Engineer’s Report) on the state’s lower north coast has revealed that koalas are thriving in regrowth State forest and may be outperforming those living in conservation reserves. This may be due to working forests having the better record when it comes to preventing and suppressing major wildfires, as well as providing a mix of successional regrowth stages which better meets the koala’s browsing and habitat preferences. Also pest animals are allowed to be terminated by experienced and licensed shooters, under heavy licensing policies.

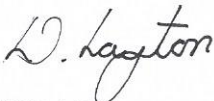
The control of weeds is another issue which is hard to control when there is virtually no access to areas of infestation. In past years, cattle owners were allowed to ageist their livestock in State Forests to control weeds etc.

It all comes back to management and proper use of areas. I firmly believe that Forestry practices in harvesting areas are better for the koalas, due to disturbance, thinning out the logs and allowing new regrowth in the areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my opinions and concerns regarding the koala strategy.

Yours faithfully

J. NOTARAS & SONS PTY LTD



Donna Layton
General Manager