

## Submission to Koala Strategy from Phil Spark – North West Ecological Services

### Concerns;

- Continued loss of optimal Koala habitat in prime agricultural land
- Increasing incidence of Chlamydia and dehydration due to extreme weather events
- Population plummeting by 50% since 2009
- Majority of conservation reserves are not optimal habitat for Koalas
- New Biodiversity Conservation Act allowing clearing of optimal habitat at an accelerating rate
- Optimal habitat is becoming marginal due to lack of shade and water
- Offsets being used to enable destruction of good habitat
- Need for better NSW state and Federal protection legislation

### Observations;

Optimal Koala habitat in the North West Slopes, Tablelands and Floodplains is associated with the richest agricultural land on basalt and alluvial soil types.

Those soil types are already the most over cleared, and the legislation proposed under the new Biodiversity Conservation Act will enable further clearing that was not allowed under the Native Vegetation Act.

Regrowth in Category 1 self-assessment land will be cleared with no consideration for its value to maintain viable populations of Koalas or provide landscape corridors.

Single trees in cultivation paddocks are being allowed to be cleared using the efficiency code. They have been stepping stone refuges and feed trees for Koalas.

Remnants of Koala habitat can be cleared using the equity code leading to further loss and fragmentation of habitat in over cleared landscapes of optimal Koala habitat.

There is an abundance of suitable box woodland habitat on the slopes but very few Koalas present. Those soil types are mostly red-brown earths that are not optimal habitat but still should have a good Koala carrying capacity.

### Recommendations;

If the clearing laws don't protect Koala habitat, they should be scrapped.

Farmers must be paid to preserve known Koala habitat.

There are blocks of optimal habitat land for sale in the region, they should be purchased for Koala refuge.

All crown land including Travelling Stock Routes and reserves that contain suitable Koala habitat must be managed for Koala conservation. In remnants where the trees are all old, tree planting and

assisted regeneration should be undertaken that includes a diversity of food source trees, shade trees and water points.

Need an assessment of all State forests, National Parks, and crown lands to identify those that lack water access points, diversity of feed trees and diversity of shade trees.

Call for expressions of interest to do the same on private land remnants.

Contract tree planters to plant those trees in strategic locations of greatest benefit.

Identify road and rail kill hotspots where signs and underpasses can be erected.

Identify towns with koala populations that may be limited by increasing security fencing. Those that have a problem erect Koala bridges over the fences.

When vaccinations for Chlamydia become available, vaccinate the wild population.

Assist wildlife carers by paying for Koala care, drugs and veterinary expenses.

Lobby the federal and state government to improved Koala protection laws.