



AUSTRALIAN KOALA FOUNDATION

The international organisation dedicated to saving the koala and its habitat

Conservation of the wild koala and its habitat is of global significance

15 July 2009

Premier Anna Bligh
Queensland Government
PO Box 15185
City East QLD 4002

Dear Premier,

On behalf of the Australian Koala Foundation, I am writing to advise that we have lodged a nomination to list the Koala Coast koala population as Endangered under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. The nomination proves this population is eligible for listing under this legislation. I also wish to advise that the AKF has nominated this population as Critically Endangered under the Federal Government's EPBC Act and await the Federal Minister's decision.

You are to be chastised. This action should have been your Government's responsibility given your public admission of its endangered status. It is Queensland's faunal emblem, for goodness sake.

For the purposes of both the EPBC Act and the Nature Conservation Act, a "geographically separate population of any animal or plant" is eligible for listing. The Koala Coast area is delineated by Manly Road and Lota Creek to the north, the Gateway and Pacific Motorways to the west, Logan River to the south, and Moreton Bay to the east. These barriers effectively isolate the resident koala population as a geographically disjunct population. Genetic analysis has confirmed this geographic isolation; koalas from the Koala Coast region are genetically distinct from all other regions in South East Queensland.

A recent report prepared by one of your Departments has concluded that koalas within the Koala Coast have declined by 51% since 2006, and by 64% in the 10 years since the original 1996-1999 surveys. These declines are generally the result of high levels of anthropogenic mortality and habitat loss. There is no scientific evidence these declines have been caused by drought even though you have made a public comment to the contrary. As such, the Koala Coast population resoundingly fulfils the requirements for listing as an endangered species under the Nature Conservation Act.

The AKF believes that listing the Koala Coast koala population as 'endangered' under the Nature Conservation Act will highlight the policy failures of the past 15 years, and increase community awareness of the plight of the koala in South East Queensland, encouraging further community participation in the recovery of this important population. I am disappointed that the Department of

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Environment and Resource Management has not already undertaken to review the status of this population under the NCA, given that the population declines have been observed and reported by departmental staff.

I would also like to take this opportunity to raise our concerns with the current process for listing species under the Nature Conservation Act. As you are no doubt aware, there appears to have been a number of significant changes to the nomination and listing process since the previous AKF nomination which was successful in listing the SEQ koala population as vulnerable under the NCA in 2003. Disturbingly, the EPA website currently has no information to guide those wishing to nominate a species for listing. In addition, the pro-forma nomination form on the EPA website has significant flaws, and does not appear to have been updated since 2007. The nomination form specifically requests anyone submitting a nomination to provide details of their publications and scientific qualifications - I would suggest this is designed to intimidate the average citizen from nominating any species for listing. Indeed I will suggest that it would be impossible for a member of the public to complete this process.

I further believe that the independence of the listing process has been compromised, as the nomination is now judged by a "technical group" many of whom are department employees, rather than by a committee of independent scientific experts as in previous years.

In short, Premier the process is flawed from beginning to end and indeed I believe I can predict the outcome both from Queensland and the Federal Government because of the perceived implications you fear from developer backlash.

Why you cannot initiate Koala Beach style developments throughout South East Queensland is just beyond me, but it is clear the development industry in Queensland is just "business as usual" to the citizen's and the koala's detriment.

A timely assessment of this nomination is requested.

Yours faithfully,

Deborah Tabart OAM
Chief Executive Officer

Cc: Minister Kate Jones, Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability
Minister Stirling Hinchliffe – Minister for Infrastructure and Planning
Mr Peter Garrett, AM MP – Federal Minister for Environment, Heritage and the Arts
Glen Elmes – Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability
David Gibson – Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Planning