



**Australian  
Koala  
Foundation**

A.C.N. 010 922 102

**PRESS RELEASE**

**23 November, 2016**

**HOW \$3 MILLION PER YEAR CAN SAVE VULNERABLE KOALA HABITAT**

Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) Landscape Ecologist Mr Dave Mitchell will tell his mapping peers that Geo Enabling the Australian community with ranked Koala landscapes will ensure the Koalas' future. With the Koala now listed as Vulnerable under the EPBC Act and a Recovery Plan already two years behind, the Koala needs decent mapping now.

"Nothing has worked to date," says Mitchell in his presentation at the NSW/ACT Regional Conference 2016 to be held on Thursday 24 November and Friday 25 November at Mercure Canberra, Braddon, ACT. With 20 years' experience, both at the desktop and in the bush, Dave Mitchell is the go-to person for information on Koala landscapes.

"The AKF has been involved with GIS mapping since 1989, when I first met David Bruce from Omnilink," Deborah Tabart OAM, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Koala Foundation shares. "He and others in the GIS community have mentored me ever since. Even then, I recognised that we had to produce the right information to save Koala habitat and that has resulted in excellent maps, costing around \$10 million, using the AKF's Koala Habitat Atlas methodology."

"Without good mapping, every planning decision is a bad decision," says Tabart. "It has been staggering to me that local councils, State governments, and even the Federal Government have refused to open dialogue with the AKF. You have to ask why. The KHA provides a clear statement of 'knowing' as opposed to 'thinking' what is good habitat."

Dave Mitchell believes he knows the reason: "because the data is too good and sadly those wishing to destroy Koalas and their habitat would prefer poor data because it makes their job easier."

"How can a Premier like Mr Baird even consider giving land clearing laws a go ahead, when they don't even have the vegetation data on the table to know what they're destroying?" asks Tabart. The NSW Government has the least vegetation data available of all the States, so it is time for mapping to play a key role in the Koalas' uncertain future.

Unless experts like the AKF produce that data, maps are, at best, a mishmash of Koala sightings and thought bubbles on what Koalas need in their landscape.

"Perhaps Dave Mitchell's presentation in Canberra will wake up the Government, development industry and wider community that we have the factual solutions," says Tabart.



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On OMNILINK's relationship with the AKF, Managing Director David Bruce has commented, "we decided to work with the AKF as we know the data is right and I am convinced that the Commonwealth Government will recognise the national significance of the data. AKF has been innovative for nearly 30 years, preparing for this time in history. It is time that evidence-based, scientifically accurate data is available for good planning decisions."

Imagine if the Federal Government bought access to the Koala Habitat Atlas in each local council area. There are 260 local government areas (LGAs) covering the 1.5 million hectares of the Koala's geographic range. In Queensland, New South Wales and the ACT it is a legal requirement for Koalas to be considered in any development application.

Local councils with Koala habitat are currently spending hundreds of thousands of dollars in an attempt to resolve conflicts between developers and the community. Using the KHA at a modest cost of around \$10,000 per LGA – a total of \$3 million per year - would resolve these conflicts. "Recovery Plans can cost in excess of \$5 million for each species," shares Mitchell. "There are currently 1700 species in the *Vulnerable* category listing under the EPBC Act waiting for Recovery Plans, so we're talking about \$8.5 billion. It will never happen. So, look at the model of providing good mapping at a modest \$3 million per year with a value add of protecting a Koala tourism industry that is estimated to be around \$3 billion per year and provides 30,000 jobs, together with protecting the thousands of other species that share the Koalas' habitat. The implications beyond Koala populations and those economic benefits are self-evident. This potential saving is an economic no-brainer."

Tabart hopes that Canberra will be open to Mitchell's presentation and see AKF's recommendation as a way for Australia to start a revolution in environmental modelling and mapping. "Imagine an industry full of incredibly talented GIS and botany professionals that could create mapping data that is unprecedented in the world."

Dave Mitchell anticipates that his time in Canberra will initiate both focussed discussions and, even better, open dialogue with Canberra bureaucrats. He will explain that in the past, the AKF had to remove the publicly accessible maps from its website ([www.savethekoala.com](http://www.savethekoala.com)) because industry refused to agree to the usage terms and not use them for commercial purposes. In partnership with OMNILINK, a subscription model based on modern web mapping services is now the proposed method of access.

### For more information or for interview requests:

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### **About the AKF**

The Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) is the principal non-profit, non-government, self-funded organisation dedicated to the conservation and effective management of the wild Koala and its habitat.

The AKF was formed in 1986 and is celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2016. Since its founding and under the direction of Chief Executive Officer Deborah Tabart OAM, the AKF is a well-known, global organisation with a strong track record in strategic Koala research, conservation and community education, with a focus on Koala habitat mapping.

In 2012, the Koala was listed as 'vulnerable to extinction', under Australian Law: the EPBC Act. This was the result of endless lobbying by the AKF and its team.

Please visit <http://www.savethekoala.com> to learn more.

Our online retail can be access at <http://www.savethekoalashop.com> .

You will also find us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).