



Australian  
Koala  
Foundation

A.C.N. 010 922 102

10 February 2009

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### Race to Save Environment

CEO of the Australian Koala Foundation Deborah Tabart OAM has said the current fires in Victoria are yet another symptom of a poorly managed landscape ahead of the launch of Dr Nicola Markus' timely new book, *On Our Watch: The race to save Australia's environment*, in Melbourne on Tuesday.

Ms Tabart has pinpointed pine plantations as possible contributors to the intensity of the fires.

"Hundreds, perhaps thousands of koalas and other wildlife have perished in the fires – they did not have a chance.

"We have to ask, why are these fires so fierce? After twenty years mapping koala habitats in Victoria, I am confident that pine plantations have some role to play," Ms Tabart said.

The 2003 Canberra fires saw Mt Stromlo which was surrounded by pine plantations destroyed.

"No one wants to deal with this sensitive issue because the timber industry is so important to our economy – and I am not saying they shouldn't exist. What I am saying is that we need to manage our industry and our landscape better.

"I challenge the Premier Brumby to place a map over the fire areas, he will find large pine plantations destroyed," Ms Tabart said.

Dr Markus' book articulates the current barriers standing in the way of halting the decline of Australia's natural environment and reveals new information about exploitation and endless inaction by successive Australian Governments.

"*On Our Watch* reveals a snapshot of Australia's current environmental situation – where we are now, how we got here, what is being done – and how inadequate legislation and inaction by the Government has failed to protect the environment," Ms Tabart said.

Dr Markus is pleased to have the endorsement of the Australian Koala Foundation (AKF).

"Sustainable development and planning is one of this country's greatest challenges and the AKF have made their mark at the frontier of this field with the Koala Beach project in northern New South Wales.

"Having their support shows the power of the movement to once and for all protect our environment," Dr Markus said.

The AKF has given a copy of the book to Minister Garrett and his staff to read.

"It is such a timely launch given both the devastation our landscape is seeing from fires, and the current review of the inadequate National Koala Conservation Strategy," Ms Tabart said.

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media release



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The continuing fragmentation and mismanagement of koala habitat throughout the koala's natural range is seen as a huge factor in the devastating intensity of the current bushfires.

To find out ways to help the Australian Koala Foundation save our koalas, visit the website at [www.savethekoala.com](http://www.savethekoala.com).

- ENDS -

- **Interview opportunities:**

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