

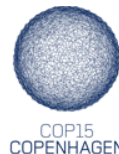


Australian
Koala
Foundation

A.C.N. 010 922 102

media release

Thursday December 10, 2009 LIVE from



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Koala key to hitting proposed emission-reduction target

With Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd under immediate pressure to triple Australia's unconditional emissions-reductions target by 2020, the Australian Koala Foundation says achieving this would be as simple as protecting Australia's koala forests.

Currently, Australia has committed to a five per cent emissions-reduction target, however, developed nation negotiators are calling for Australia to commit to 15 per cent.

A 15 per cent target would mean Australia would need to find an extra 50 million tonnes of CO² abatement or more a year by 2020.

According to Australian Koala Foundation chief executive officer Deborah Tabart OAM, land clearing currently accounts for 18 per cent of Australia's emissions.

AKF science proves that protecting the koala forests of Australia would not only reduce emissions by locking up the carbon in the trees, but the amount of carbon stored in the trees in these forests would fill the required 50 million tonnes of abatement for over 200 years (see over page for explanation of this science).

"If the Australian Government committed to protecting koala habitat then they would also fulfill their required additional abatement," Ms Tabart said.

"Across Australia, remaining koala habitat amounts to some 41 million hectares, so protecting this habitat, rather than knocking it down, would certainly provide the required emissions reductions.

Furthermore, the AKF argues that the current LULUCF (Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry) does not account for the carbon being lost every day by the indiscriminate clearing of significant land parcels to make way for development, infrastructure or agriculture and the removal of large eucalyptus trees in backyards.

"Every day, huge Eucalypt trees are being cut down on private property without any acknowledgement by the government," Ms Tabart said.

"For example, while official government figures suggest koala forest cover in Southeast Queensland increased by 8% between 1980 and 2004, anyone living in the area would agree that this just simply is not the case.

"It is clear to the AKF that land clearing down the East Coast of Australia has increased rather than decreased due to immense pressure for development and infrastructure.

"The koala continues to provide simple solutions to prevent climate change – by protecting the koala forests we have, rather than the constant 'death by a thousand cuts' we are seeing, we would make a significant contribution to reducing Australia's carbon emissions."

For more information, please visit www.savethekoala.com.

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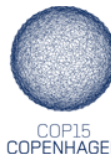


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- For interview opportunities: Please e-mail Katrina@savethekoala.com or call +61 439 997 787
- For AKF research review its "Carbon and Koalas Collide" resources at <https://www.savethekoala.com/carbonandkoalas.html>

FURTHER EXPLANATION

- Protecting the koala forests would directly reduce Australia's emissions from land clearing which currently constitute some 18 per cent of emissions.
- A 15 per cent emissions reduction target would mean Australia would need to find an extra 50 million tonnes of CO² abatement or more a year by 2020.
- AKF studies in Brisbane Australia and Charleville Australia measured the carbon stored in the trees. Based on these results, we can make a rough calculation that 50 million tonnes is equivalent to the carbon stored in trees on between 180,000 and 625,000 hectares.
- Across Australia, remaining koala habitat amounts to some 41 million hectares. The protection of this habitat would certainly provide the required emissions reductions. Protecting the koala forests of eastern Australia in their entirety would protect some 11 billion tonnes of carbon, sufficient to fill the required extra 50 million tonnes of abatement for over 200 years. In fact, just a single property in Western Queensland (20,000 hectares) could hold more than 1.5 million tonnes of carbon.
- Example of trees being felled without government knowledge: In one corner of Kookaburra Street in Brisbane, Australia, five trees measured by the AKF have been cleared in the past week, amounting to some five tonnes of carbon being destroyed. Similarly, at another nearby site we measured on Gap Creek Road, six trees since removed contained some 3.5 tonnes of carbon. These emissions have not been reported, deemed insignificant from an emissions monitoring perspective.
- The Queensland Government's recently released exposure draft of its proposed koala conservation State Planning Regulatory Provisions further demonstrates the lack of logic on carbon emissions. The provisions allow for the removal of koala habitat in Southeast Queensland by providing for offsets - planting new koala habitat. It is obvious that mature koala forest holds far more carbon than new plantations; even in mature forests, young trees may only hold 1% of the carbon stored in old growth trees. Yet under emissions monitoring, if you clear mature forests but replant and equal area it does not count as producing emissions.