



## Australian Koala Foundation

*The international organisation dedicated to saving the koala and its habitat.*

### ***Senate Inquiry into the Status, health and sustainability of Australia's koala population***

**Tuesday 3 May 2011 11:05am**

On behalf of the Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) I am pleased to appear before this Senate Committee about the plight of the koala.

Firstly, I want to table our Potential Koala Habitat Atlas Map that predicts koala habitat across 1.1 million square kilometres on the eastern seaboard of Australia – the original geographic range of the koala. It does not take into account any Islands that were not part of the koala's original range. The map also identifies our estimate of koala numbers. We maintain and believe strongly that there are no more than 85,000 koalas and more likely nearer the lower range of our scientific estimates of 45,000 animals. We therefore ask the Committee to respect and accept that after 25 years of commitment and over \$8m worth of research that these should be the koala numbers until proven otherwise.

Secondly, the AKF wants the Committee, to acknowledge the work of not only the AKF in our continued battle to identify issues affecting the koala, but the communities around Australia who have tirelessly healed and returned koalas to the bush while all tiers of government have abrogated their responsibilities.

Thirdly, the AKF wants this Committee to get to the root cause of the koalas plight. Very simply, if koala trees were not destroyed, koalas would not suffer starvation, they would not be ripped apart by dogs, killed by motor vehicles and the disease rates would be less. Protection of the 50 tree species in our submission is imperative if the koala is to survive and thrive.

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Lastly, the AKF has seen and heard much in our 25 year history. The koala does not, in these difficult times need more research which sometimes seeks to delay and confuse, the koala needs legislative protection at the Federal level. Research and other actions can then follow. This simple act of listing the koala would ensure that all landholders, when wanting to change or develop their land practices would be under strict and powerful guidelines to minimize damage to koala habitat. Responsible industries should not fear this oversight and I am saddened that many forces have gone to great lengths to stop the koalas protection, not just in the here and now, but historically.

I am delighted to hear there will be another hearing later this month and if necessary the AKF will be prepared to appear again, even *in camera* because the forces that seek to stop protection of the koala are harsh, determined and persistent.

I look forward to your questions.

Deborah Tabart OAM  
Chief Executive Officer  
Australian Koala Foundation