



**Australian  
Koala  
Foundation**

A.C.N. 010 922 102

**MEDIA RELEASE: AUSTRALIAN KOALA FOUNDATION ISSUES WARNING ON THE  
WATERMARK COAL PROJECT IN GUNNEDAH NSW**

The Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) has today lodged a submission with the Planning Assessment Commission currently reviewing the Watermark Coal Project for the New South Wales Government, warning of our concerns with the project.

“The AKF has had an active interest in the Koalas in the Gunnedah region for more than 15 years,” said Deborah Tabart OAM, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Koala Foundation.

“Gunnedah is home to one of the few remaining Koala populations of significance left in New South Wales. It is a population of regional, State and Federal significance, and this proposal will obliterate 847 ha of Koala Habitat, which while significant in itself, is but a fraction of the Koala Habitat likely to be impacted by the indirect impacts of this proposal, such as a reduction in corridors for animals to move around the landscape and increased mortality from trucks and trains associated with the development.

“We have a myriad of concerns – the quality of the science, the Koala population estimates and the value of the proposed offsets among others – but the truly shocking aspect of this project is the proposal to translocate up to 300 animals off the development site.

“There is a wealth of evidence to suggest translocations lead to significant Koala mortality; there are many, many examples of translocations gone wrong. In Victoria, translocations with 80%-100% mortality of moved animals - this entire program was subsequently disbanded. In Queensland one study showed up to 30% mortality. Another 58% mortality.

These are appalling figures, and the true figures could be higher still given the level of secrecy which surrounds many of these programs.

“To suggest that you can move nearly 300 animals with ease is pure nonsense. This is an unprecedented exercise, and to be frank, the groundwork has not yet been done to suggest this will be anything short of a catastrophe.

“The Koala is listed as a threatened species at both the State and Federal levels, and a development of this magnitude will have a dramatic, detrimental impact on what is, at present, one of the few remaining significant Koala populations in NSW.

These animals are already at great risk, in particular from drought. If this project goes ahead, the Koalas on this site and surrounds are doomed,” said Ms. Tabart.

A copy of the submission can be [found online here](#).