



## Regional Forestry Agreements: Far from Eden for Koalas

Photographs of a koala severed cleanly in half within native forestry area is included in the Australian Koala Foundation's submission to the *Senate Inquiry into the status, health and sustainability of the koala* currently being convened in Canberra.

The tragic images show the shocking reality of breaches of the Regional Forestry Agreements says AKF CEO, Deborah Tabart OAM. But nothing changes. Industry just continues to say all is well and the conservationists call for more fair play. Conflict drives the industry.

"If the requirement to undertake a pre-logging survey had been carried out, this could never have happened", says Ms Tabart.

Ms Tabart says forestry protocols are such that harvesting is meant to cease immediately if a koala, or any evidence of a koala, is observed. Yet the principles and the practice are seemingly worlds apart.

Ms Tabart admits that she's witnessed first-hand forestry workers in forestry coups failing to stick to tried and tested procedures that are designed to protect native wildlife from injury or loss of life.

"For a person who understands how difficult koalas can be to spot, even for experienced observers, it is beyond the pale to see a casual stroll around a vehicle pass as a fauna survey," Tabart said.

"Over twenty five years, I have watched the forestry industry defend its position, while our trees get smaller and smaller. The industry has to be bordering on unsustainable, particularly when I see perfectly good saw logs go into wood chipping mills.

"I have seen those trucks for myself. I also recently realized that Governments do not want the koala listed, because it isn't.

"Forest Stewardship certification does not have to take into account the presence of koalas. Even after all this time, I find myself shocked by the complete inadequacy of the system to protect the koala.

"I think the average Australia would shudder if they knew what went on in the forests," Ms Tabart said.

Ms Tabart also questions how a few dollars per tonne of harvested wood, subsidized by state governments with the majority of profits going to overseas investors, is given a greater value than the life of a koala, the country's iconic species.

"No-one is allowed into that industry. I am confident it is more about jobs than true sustainability, no matter how much they protest.



**27 April 2011**

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“Overall, this is the type of operation one might expect to see in a third-world country. In Australia, in 2011, surely we should be able to turn a dollar much smarter, and not at the expense of our heritage,” Ms Tabart said.

The AKF’s submission is no. 25 and can be found at <http://bit.ly/gQtIzz> or [http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/ec\\_ctte/koalas/submissions.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/ec_ctte/koalas/submissions.htm)

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