



Tourism Would Miss the Koala

In wake of Cyclone Yasi and unprecedented floods across Eastern Australia, the tourism industry has learnt how Mother Nature can cause a billion dollar blow to the economy and you have to wonder what would happen to our tourism dollar if the koala – our greatest tourism icon disappeared.

The Australian Koala Foundation has identified that the koala contributes between \$1.1 billion and a staggering \$2.5 billion for tourism every year in Australia and creates over 9000 jobs.

Deborah Tabart OAM, CEO Australian Koala Foundation, will tell the Senate Inquiry into Australia's koala population that habitat loss, disease and natural disasters are taking their toll on the koala population with human and economic consequences are imminent.

“Without that injection of \$2.5 billion into our economy from the koala, we are hurting our own tourism industry.

“The first thing Oprah Winfrey did when she landed on our shores was cuddle a koala,” Ms Tabart said.

“Australian tourist operators know how important koalas are, but really don't think it could happen to them. But what if it does?”

“The koala, like other iconic species: elephants, whales and gorillas, are loved by people all over the world and bring them to our country.”

Ms Tabart believes it is now time Tourism Ministers and the industry genuinely understand their role in helping to safeguard the koala population for a long term sustainable tourist industry.

“I don't think they actually understand that it could disappear,” says Tabart.

“We are reeling from the floods and cyclones. Now is the time to think through how to protect such a valuable commodity.”

The Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre identified that 18.3% of our international tourists are attracted to Australia purely because of our wildlife with 67.5% of all international tourists wanting to see animals.

To find out ways to help the Australian Koala Foundation save our koalas, visit the website at www.savethekoala.com.

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