



Australian
Koala
Foundation

A.C.N. 010 922 102

16 May 2011

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*** MEDIA ALERT ***

Research Dollars not a Long Term Solution for Koala Survival

Deborah Tabart OAM, CEO of the Australian Koala Foundation is concerned that the official response to the declining population will be to throw funds at research and the development of vaccines while avoiding the crucial action of listing the koala as vulnerable and protecting remaining koala habitat.

Ms Tabart has voiced these concerns as she prepares to attend the second Senate hearing into *the status, health and sustainability of the koala* in Canberra this Thursday 19th May.

The first hearing of the Senate Inquiry in Brisbane saw Senators Fisher (Chair) Brown and Cameron exposed to in-depth accounts of widespread Chlamydia within the population and the Koala retrovirus which leaves infected animals more susceptible to disease and cancers.

"The easy way out is for Government to pump funds into research to make it appear as if they are doing something but why find vaccines if there is no habitat left for koalas to live in?"

"How are we going to line the koalas up for their first injections?"

"A cure for these diseases is very important but there should be no more research until the simple act of listing the koala as vulnerable, and protecting 50 tree species, occurs. Then the scientists can continue to unravel the mysteries of this majestic creature," said Tabart.

Ms Tabart made it clear to the Senators in the first hearing that legislative protection at the Federal level is needed she advised that the act of listing the koala would produce effective and powerful guidelines to minimize damage to koala habitat.

"My preference would be for a specific National Koala Act and maybe this could come from these hearings.

"Existing legislation is still pretty weak." says Tabart.

Ms Tabart went on to say,

"Very simply, if koala trees were not destroyed, koalas would not suffer starvation, there would be significantly fewer instances of them being ripped apart by dogs and killed by motor vehicles and the disease rates would be reduced,"

She was pleased to see that a good cross section of industry, including property, forestry and coal are to be represented at the second hearing.

"I am looking forward to hearing "industry", who is often the cause of habitat destruction, being asked how they can help the koala or better still, if they want to help the koala".

Ms Tabart hopes she will see the dire need for habitat protection being recognised by the forum as the key issue in the fight to save the koala when she flies south to Canberra for the second Committee Hearing.

- ENDS -

Interview opportunities: phone Deborah on 0407 750 668 or Connor on 07 3229 7233:

- Deborah Tabart OAM, CEO Australian Koala Foundation, will be in Canberra in the late afternoon on the 18th May and available for interviews. Deborah will also be available for interviews during the lunch and morning tea breaks of the Senate Committee Hearing on Thursday 19th May, 2011 (program available here <http://bit.ly/kE4z2P>)

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