



Australian
Koala
Foundation

A.C.N. 010 922 102

media release

BACKGROUND: AUSTRALIA'S KOALA WOMAN

After 22 years fighting for Australia's endangered koala population, Australian Koala Foundation CEO Deborah Tabart OAM has become one of Australia's most celebrated and notorious conservationists and at the age of 58 feels like she is only just starting her career.

According to Deborah, the koala has taught her everything she knows.

Her job title amongst many things could announce Deborah as a scientist, politician, sustainability expert, field site coordinator, fundraiser, lobbyist, spokesperson, teacher and consultant – but at heart Deborah is simply The Koala Woman.

Next week, Deborah will arrive in Copenhagen to represent the koala and demonstrate to the world just how carbon and koala's collide and table the solutions the koala has in the fight against climate change.

Little did Deborah know when she first set out to raise funds for the koala in 1988, just how complex the fight for the furry marsupial would be. To her, the koala is the jigsaw piece in a highly flawed puzzle.

Growing up being read Australian bush poetry and literature, with parents who instilled in her the importance of conservation after witnessing the extinction of the Tasmanian Tiger, Deborah feels she was destined from a young age to be the koala's champion.

In this role she has had to contend with governments, developers, multi-national corporations, communities, media, conservationists, other NGOs and scientists.

The koala's plight has seen her dine with US dignitaries, meet with the HRH Prince of Wales' officials at Clarence House, lead community koala marches and journey into the Australian outback with scientists to gather koala data.

Deborah's campaigning in the USA saw the United States Government Fish and Wildlife Service Department list the koala as a vulnerable species in 2000, a significant win in her journey to date.

In 2008, Deborah was honoured for her lifelong commitment to the koala when awarded an Order of Australia Medal, but her most notable achievement to date has been funding and leading the AKF's \$8 million worth of koala research.

The research has produced the most extensive wildlife and habitat maps in the world and are so highly regarded that Deborah was awarded the Computerworld Smithsonian Medal for them in 1998.

For 20 years, the foundation's mantra has been: No tree. No me.



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A demonstration on how visionary Deborah and her colleagues are, the AKF now has the science and a solution to prove why the koala trees of Australia should be protected. It is this message that Deborah will take to Copenhagen.

Now armed with the science to support the terrible state of the koala and its habitat, she is determined to mobilise the people of the world with the koala's story and hopes to cause a cultural revolution that will ultimately lead to the Australian government listing the koala as vulnerable.

Following the announcement of the Foundation's partnership with the Asia Pacific Screen Awards, Deborah will next year focus energies on brokering partnerships with the international filming community to capture and promote the plight of koala.

In her lifetime, Deborah hopes to see all koala habitats mapped, the enactment of The National Koala Act and the establishment of koala conservation zones where people live with respect and understanding for koalas and other wildlife.

Deborah has cradled hundreds of her furry friends over the years and still her love for, and determination for its cause, never ceases.

When people ask why she has devoted her life to this precious Australian icon her answer is simple:

"The koala to me represents all that is beautiful about my country Australia. In my time as the koala woman I have watched the cruelty that has been perpetrated on this beautiful creature and this stirs in me a great sense of injustice and that is what drives me. As I go out into the world to fight for the koala, I am always humbled by everything it represents. You see, as champion of the koala, I am not only seeking to protect it, but also my home, my country, and its wonderful people. Because, No Tree. No Me. We need to protect what we have or there will be dire consequences."

For more information, please visit www.savethekoala.com.

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- **For interview opportunities: Please e-mail Katrina@savethekoala.com or call +61 439 997 787**
- For AKF research and to review the "Carbon and Koalas Collide" document go to <https://www.savethekoala.com/carbonandkoalas.html>