



## AUSTRALIAN KOALA FOUNDATION

The international organisation dedicated to saving the koala and its habitat.

The Hon. Mr Greg Hunt MP  
Member for Flinders  
PO Box 274  
**HASTINGS VIC 3915**

18/03/2014

Dear Mr Hunt

On behalf of the Australian Koala Foundation we write to you in your capacity as a sitting member and in the hope that we can raise your awareness about your Koala constituents. Your electorate, one of 127 in Australia does or did have thriving Koala colonies at white settlement. Since that time, either from the fur trade (estimated to be in the millions of skins) and modern threats of development, mining, roads and dogs, Koala numbers have dwindled. Only 5 of these 127 electorates now have a population of more than 1000 animals [www.savethekoala.com/Seven\\_Federal\\_Seats](http://www.savethekoala.com/Seven_Federal_Seats)

If you go to the AKF's website and click on Act or Axe, you will see that we have scientifically estimated the amount of Koala habitat left in your electorate and made an assessment on how many Koalas we believe can live in that remaining landscape. This data is the culmination of 26 years of dedicated work in the bush and millions of dollars. I am confident you will agree that if we are correct that these are indeed sobering figures and your Koalas are either completely gone or beyond recovery. The Federal Government is and should be the custodian of the Koala as we pointed out in the Senate Inquiry in 2011. It is the AKF's view that for over 200 years the Koala has been taken for granted and successive governments have abrogated their responsibility for its protection. As a result of the Senate Inquiry, the Koala was listed as Vulnerable under the EPBC Act in May 2012, but it is the AKF's view that the legislation is not enforced, nor is it strong enough to protect Koala trees; their lifeblood. There are now strong moves afoot to weaken that listing process as the Abbott Government works towards having a "one stop approach" approval process. Guidelines for that process are in AKF's opinion not sufficient to secure an already vulnerable population. Our concerns fall on deaf ears.

So, we have commissioned a Koala Protection Act from barristers in Australia and abroad and we now seek your support for its tabling and enactment in Parliament. Minister Hunt, could table it right now with your support. It is written, it is a considered piece of legislation that will enable a logical assessment of whether land is Koala habitat. Very simply we argue that if Koala trees are present, then any development proponent must prove their activity is benign to that landscape. There is so much wrong with current legislation that can often be cumbersome but worse still, requires "self referral" by land holders, and environmental consultants are often under immense pressure to ignore or not find Koala populations for their client - a major flaw in the detail of all environmental legislation. It has been written to protect industry, not the environment.

[www.savethekoala.com](http://www.savethekoala.com)

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### JAPAN DONATIONS

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Koala Kikin 00100-8-762653  
At all Post Offices in Japan

The Koala Protection Act is based on the Bald Eagle Act brought into power after the United States was attacked in Pearl Harbour. The Americans could not imagine their emblem going to extinction at a time when it was needed most as a symbol of its country might and power. In my thinking, the Koala also has that power and if our concerns are correct, then there could be a time in Australia when our emblem is gone. Can anyone truly imagine what would happen to the tourist industry if the Koala was lost to our nation? Have you every had this thought or like so many in the world, think that Zoos will be the answer. I remind you to think of the last Tasmanian Tiger in 1936 in the Hobart Zoo and it was protected 3 months before it went to extinction.

The Bald Eagle took 50 years to be removed from the endangered species listing and it is our view that the Koala may take double that time or more. If you really ponder this thought, then you will see that you could make a terrific difference by supporting the Koala and our advice.

As you will see in the Koala Woman's comments on the Act or Axe site, the Australian Government either has little or no data to form an opinion on the plight of the Koala and of course we are also seeking anything you may have that can upgrade our information. Historical data held could hold the key for recovery of the Koala. Can you imagine 400,000 skins leaving the Eden wharf in the 1920's? Where did they come from? Imagine if those numbers could return to those forests? So much to be done.

If you do have information about Koalas in your local area, we are more than happy to receive it and evaluate the information. This could be from historical societies, aboriginal elders or locals who can often say "we used to have them and now they are gone". Anything that could help us in the recovery process would be greatly appreciated.

We write to seek your support for a "Claw" to show your support for the Koala. It is our view that most Australians want their elected representative to support the animals and trees that live there. Currently you have an "Axe", which says you do not support the protection of the Koala.

I would of course to be happy to provide a briefing for you or your staff to support our call to arms.

Yours sincerely,  
Deborah

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Deborah Tabart OAM". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Deborah" being more prominent and the last name "Tabart" and "OAM" following in a similar style.

Deborah Tabart OAM  
Chief Executive Officer