



**Australian
Koala
Foundation**

A.C.N. 010 922 102

PRESS RELEASE: Poor mapping allows projects to slip through NSW's approval processes

14/7/15

The New South Wales State Government cannot make informed decisions on projects that impact the environment, including the Shenhua mine, because the State's vegetation mapping is totally inadequate.

The Australian Koala Foundation's CEO Deborah Tabart OAM has written to Premier Mike Baird calling on him "catch-up" with his neighbouring States and rectify this gaping void.

Ms Tabart said it was almost impossible to believe that the New South Wales Government could think it was in a position to advise the Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt on a project as large as the Shenhua mine without accurate and detailed vegetation data.

"For example during the Planning Assessment Commission inquiry AKF showed that the Namoi Catchment Authority's vegetation map showed better-quality Koala habitat on the mine site than Shenhua's map.

"Which one was right? This project will impact on 35 square kilometres, much of which is Koala habitat. With decent mapping, the PAC would have been able to make its own, truly independent decision" she said.

"How can the Australian people have faith that its leaders will make good decisions on its biggest asset, the natural environment, and in Gunnedah's case, also the State's food bowl?"

"It is incumbent of the custodians of our country to ensure our landscape is passed onto our future generations in a sustainable state and this, in New South Wales right now is impossible with this current monumental lack of knowledge," she said.

"In my long career of nearly 30 years I have called for this in meeting after meeting with all levels of Government but nothing ever changes. This allows industry to just 'wing it' with regard to environmental management with massive consequences to the community. "



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Ms Tabart said the user community (government, developer and mining industries, community groups etc.) generally acknowledged the scale of vegetation mapping in NSW is far too broad, with vast tracts of land still unmapped. "The consequences of this lack of data can be dire and future generations will be the ones to pay.

"This is not just about Koalas, I imagine industry would also share my concerns,"

"...Or not," Ms Tabart said.

Queensland, South Australia and Victoria have consistent state-wide vegetation mapping, which has enabled AKF to complete Koala Habitat Atlases (KHAs) for Koalas in these States.

AKF has obtained and examined more than 400 individual datasets in NSW to produce Koala habitat maps, but while limited mapping is available, it was not good enough for the task.

"At the moment, it's like trying to find your way around Sydney using a map of Australia," Ms Tabart said.

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