



The international organisation dedicated  
to saving the Koala and its habitat

18<sup>th</sup> September, 2015

Ms. Lisa Neville,  
Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water  
Level 17, 8 Nicholson St.  
East Melbourne  
VIC 3002  
Via Fax and email

Dear Ms. Neville,

On behalf of the Australian Koala Foundation (AKF), I am writing to acknowledge a courtesy call I received from Mr. Stuart McConnell from your Department regarding the Otway Koala cull to begin next week.

In that phone conversation I asked Mr. McConnell why he was ringing. Clearly it was not an invitation to attend the assessments, but I was able to ask some questions of your intentions for the field trip.

Every question I had regarding mapping, guidelines, outcomes, research protocols, ethics and habitat management was met with no response, and the AKF has certainly not been included in any sort of consultation prior to your announcement other than this single random telephone call.

Press reports note there is further consultation 'with a panel of animal welfare and ecological experts on short and long term measures to effectively and humanely manage the overabundant koalas' and I would like to know whose advice has been sought; I wonder whether they too were given a courtesy call, which your PR team could perhaps call 'consultation'.

I understand that your Department plans to:

- 1) *Trial translocations of 30 animals to other locations, within the Otway Ranges.*

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If this is occurring, then the AKF wants to understand how you chose the release sites. I would like AKF to see detailed mapping that gave your Department confidence the habitats are capable of a successful project. For over 50 years, your Department seems to have chosen very badly, otherwise you would not have the problem you face right now.

2) *Another round of capture and assessment, euthanizing sick animals.*

Do you have publicly available research and ethics protocols? It has been AKF's experience in the past that the mantra from the Department is "we do not need ethics approvals or research protocols because this is a management operation, not a research project". Is this the case this time?

AKF notes that 400 animals are to be assessed over 10 working days, which means a capture of around 40 animals per day. How big is your capture team? If your team is small, AKF doesn't believe that you can do proper health assessments for this number of animals in a full, ethical and meaningful way. What is the budget for this assessment?

3) *A new provision for healthy dependent back-young which will go into care.*

Is this a nice way of saying that Zoos will 'rescue baby koalas' so the public will not know that you killed them last time? Will the zoos be able to pick and choose the cutest joeys? How much will they pay for these animals?

Can you please let me know the legal authority that will give you this right? I am confident this is against Australian law and could be seen as sanitizing the removal of healthy Koalas from the bush for commercial gain. South Australia sold Koalas to Zoos from previous 'assessments', and many of them died. At that time it was rumoured that government sold them for \$5000.00 per animal – is it your intention to charge the Zoos for these animals?

4) *And then female Koalas will be given fertility control.*

Many years ago a respected researcher resigned from the work being done with regard to female sterilization, due to concerns about the corrosive nature of the adjuvant used to deliver the contraceptive. Prior to his resignation, he was able to



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explain his concerns to me and to our Research Chairman. Your Department has never been able to provide the AKF with any research that shows that the sterilization of females does not have a detrimental effect on the individual animal, nor on the social structure of the Koalas in the region. Have things changed? If so, what documents can you provide?

I appreciate that there are animals starving and trees damaged, but the AKF did warn previous Governments and have provided maps to your Department as recently as August 2011 prior to the Senate hearings in Melbourne. We warned you that these animals needed attention and you have ignored it all. Is that why we've received a courtesy call now? Mr. Connell did not appear to have even read my Diary dated 27 May 2015, which asked a list of questions about the previous cull. I am very surprised he had not taken the time.

It seems the best way to ensure that your Department has oversight is for my scientific team to be included in this assessment, and an independent TV Show, like *60 Minutes* or *Four Corners*, accompanies us all. I did ask for that in the past when your Department planned to euthanize 45 animals that had received the contraceptive implants. I understand that only 16 animals were killed, which I understand from my advice rendered the research experiment inconclusive. Will you invite my team to the assessments with a film crew? If your Government is proud of what is happening, why would the media not be invited?

Your Department has a sad history of cruelty to Koalas (Snake Island and Mt Eccles data and more) but I am confident that this time with the world watching, next week will be more respectful. I can take some comfort in that thought.

Yours faithfully,

Deborah Tabart OAM  
Chief Executive Officer  
Australian Koala Foundation