



## Australian Koala Foundation

A.C.N. 010 922 102

**Press Release – 09/10/2015**

### **93,000 mistakes: Government continues to fail Cape Otway Koalas**

The Victorian Government has planted 93,000 trees of the wrong species in an ill-informed attempt to protect the starving Koala population of Cape Otway, and to cover up a secret culling of our native icon, according to the Australian Koala Foundation (AKF).

Since 2012 two types of Eucalypt have been planted for this tree-planting initiative, neither of which are the best species for the Koalas of the region.

Deborah Tabart OAM, Chief Executive of the AKF, said that it's important to note that there are hundreds of different tree species that Koalas eat, and that their diet varies greatly from one region to the next.

"It is complex, but we've offered our advice, which is based off millions of dollars' worth of research, over and over to the Victorian Government, to no avail," Ms Tabart said.

"I would be embarrassed if I was the person who approved the planting of the wrong tree species," she said.

This follows the recent news of sick Koalas being euthanised in the region, which the Victorian Government says is a result of overpopulation.

Ms Tabart disagrees, saying the current situation is a direct reflection of the Victorian Government's lack of ecological expertise, now and in the past.

"There are issues, huge issues, with the trees, and these issues are being clouded by the government culling Koalas under the guise of welfare," Ms Tabart said.

"Thirty years ago, these Koalas were moved to Cape Otway for tourism purposes.

"They shouldn't have been, because the preferred trees for Victorian Koalas do not grow well on these soils," she said.

"Basically, these Koalas have been stuck eating the wrong trees for 30 years and they're sick and the trees are sick. Worse still, 93,000 of the same trees have been planted that cannot possibly fix problem.

"It should have been a complex mix of species and the Victorian Government managers just don't get that – it is truly amazing to me," she said.

The AKF states that Koalas need a diet of primary food species, secondary food species and supplementary species, or in human food pyramid speak: meat, vegetables and dessert (**see food pyramid last page**)

"The Koalas in Cape Otway are extremely sick, as we've seen in the news, because they've only got *Coastal Manna Gum* to eat, which is a secondary tree species.



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Ms Tabart said put simply, it's like a human having no choice but to eat only pumpkin for their whole life.

"The Koalas have been eating pumpkin for over 30 years – not one other species existed in that landscape," she said.

The Government tree planting initiatives at Cape Otway have focused on planting 93,000 *Coastal Manna Gum* or 'pumpkin', and *Messmate*, which the AKF likens to 'carrots'.

"The Minister's Department is incapable of thinking long term, it's just a reactive 'kill the Koalas now and leave the problem to arise again in the future' response.

"I am starting to think that the Minister has not been briefed well by her advisors and if she knows this is the problem, she should have explained the problem fully to the public at large, instead of her secretive approach," she said.

Ms Tabart has outlined her concerns to Victorian Environment Minister Lisa Neville (copy and paste <http://bit.ly/1Qc62Gk> into browser to see letter).

"AKF has world-class mapping, and our ecologists could help advise the Government on how best to manage the Koalas and trees in this region," she said.

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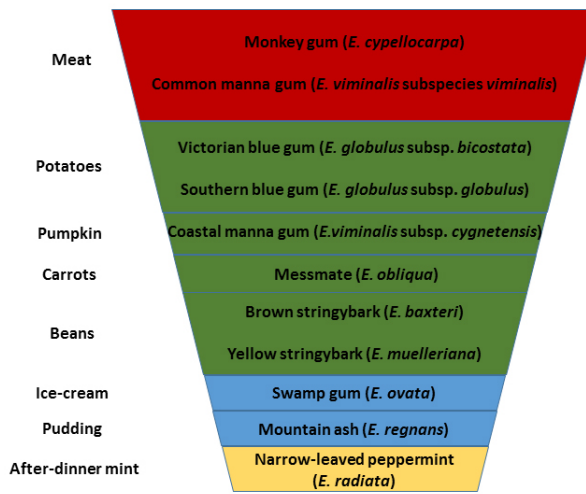
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## Victoria's Koala Food Pyramid

Koalas in coastal areas of Western Victoria would normally be eating this:



Koalas translocated to Cape Otway in 1981 have only had:

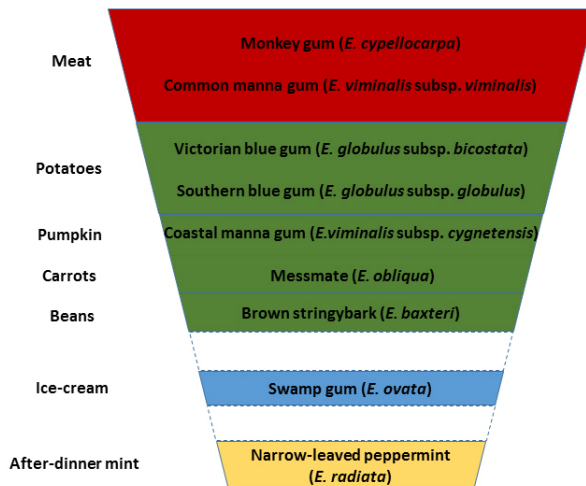
Pumpkin Coastal manna gum (*E. viminalis* subsp. *cygnetensis*)

Who decided to plant 93,000 new trees at Cape Otway since 2012, but only planted pumpkin and carrots?\*

Pumpkin Coastal manna gum (*E. viminalis* subsp. *cygnetensis*)  
Carrots Messmate (*E. obliqua*)

\* Koalas will not be able to use these trees until 2025 (at the earliest)

The Victorian Government is going to relocate Koalas to areas around Lorne. The AKF thinks these trees should be present at any potential release site †:



† AKF assumes the Victoria Government has checked to see whether these species are present before releasing any Koalas.

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