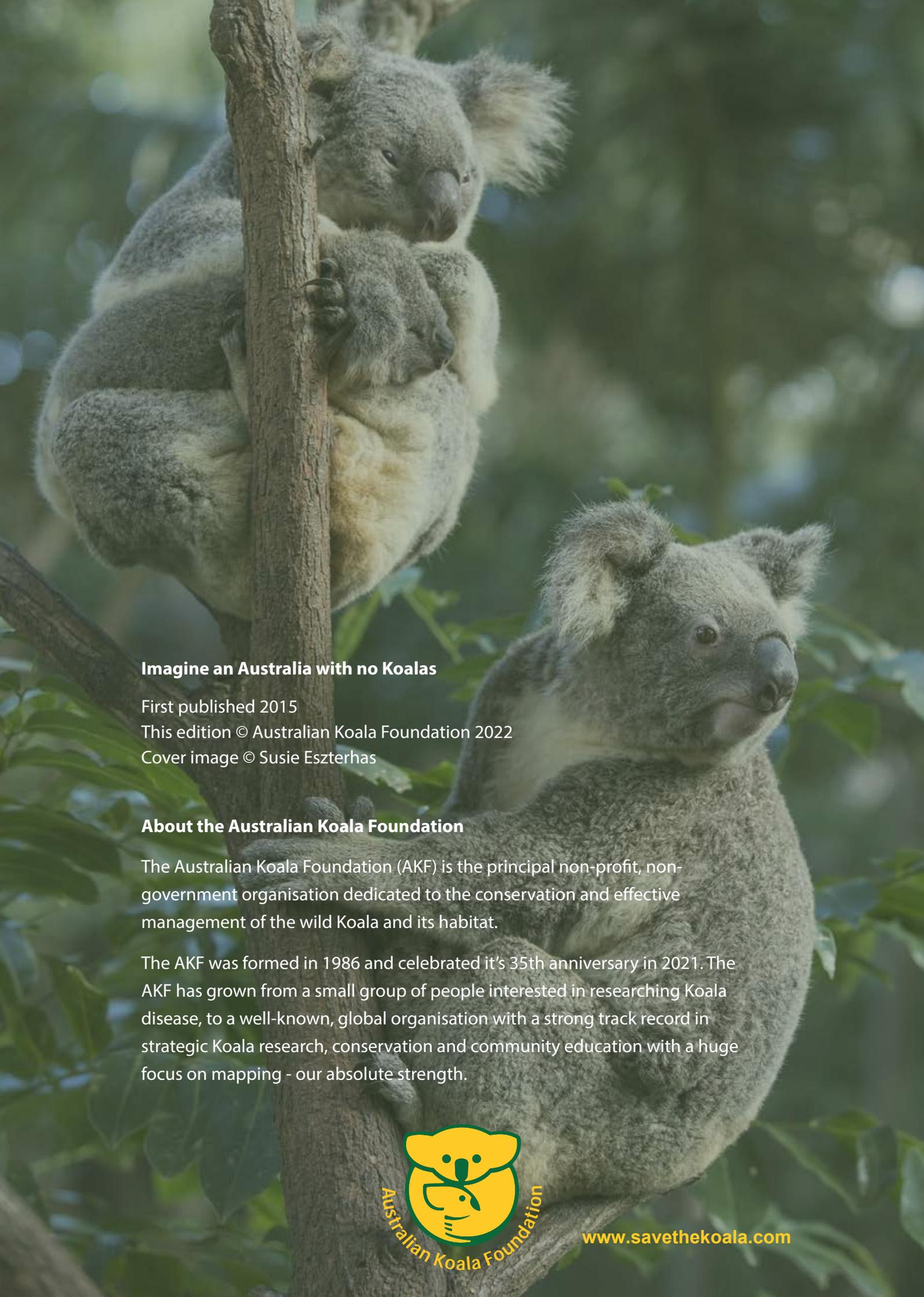




**IMAGINE**  
**AN AUSTRALIA**  
**WITH NO KOALAS**



## **Imagine an Australia with no Koalas**

First published 2015

This edition © Australian Koala Foundation 2022

Cover image © Susie Eszterhas

### **About the Australian Koala Foundation**

The Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) is the principal non-profit, non-government organisation dedicated to the conservation and effective management of the wild Koala and its habitat.

The AKF was formed in 1986 and celebrated it's 35th anniversary in 2021. The AKF has grown from a small group of people interested in researching Koala disease, to a well-known, global organisation with a strong track record in strategic Koala research, conservation and community education with a huge focus on mapping - our absolute strength.



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

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# WHY AUSTRALIA NEEDS THE KOALA PROTECTION ACT

*Koalas are in serious decline. Habitat destruction, drought, fatal domestic and wild dog attacks, bushfire, strikes from vehicles and disease have all resulted in crashing numbers across the country.*

There is no adequate legislation to protect Koalas and Koala habitat in Australia.

Koalas were listed as a “vulnerable” species under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act in 2012. This should be the primary law for protecting Australia’s environment, yet it is powerless. The listing took the Australian Koala Foundation 12 years to achieve, but has been meaningless; it has failed to stop the declines. Nothing works.

That is why the Koala, and Australia, needs the Koala Protection Act (KPA).

**“There is no adequate legislation to protect Koalas and Koala habitat in Australia.”**



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# THE BALD EAGLE ACT

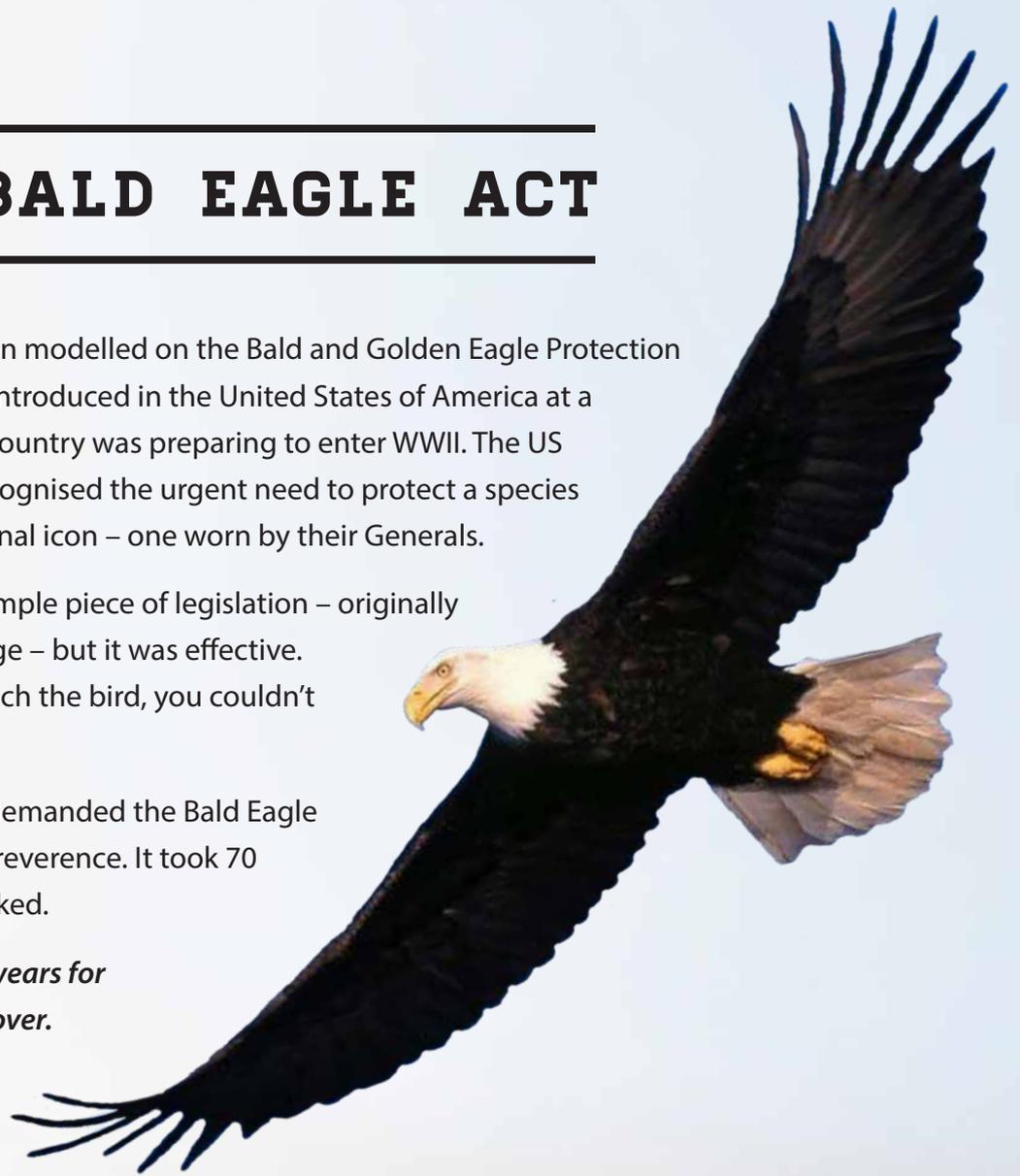
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The KPA has been modelled on the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, which was introduced in the United States of America at a time when the country was preparing to enter WWII. The US Government recognised the urgent need to protect a species that was a National icon – one worn by their Generals.

The Act was a simple piece of legislation – originally only a single page – but it was effective. You couldn't touch the bird, you couldn't touch the trees.

The legislation demanded the Bald Eagle be treated with reverence. It took 70 years, but it worked.

*It may take 200 years for the Koala to recover.*



## Purpose of the Koala Protection Act

1

Protect the Koala for future generations.

2

Protect the habitat on which the Koala depends.

3

Ensure that potential actions which may threaten the Koala are carefully considered with due concern for the consequences.



# WHY PROTECT OUR KOALAS?

*Consider an Australia without the Koala.*

The Koala is an Australian icon, known and loved throughout the world. It is one of the few species with the public support to really change the world.

If we can't save the Koala, we can't save anything.

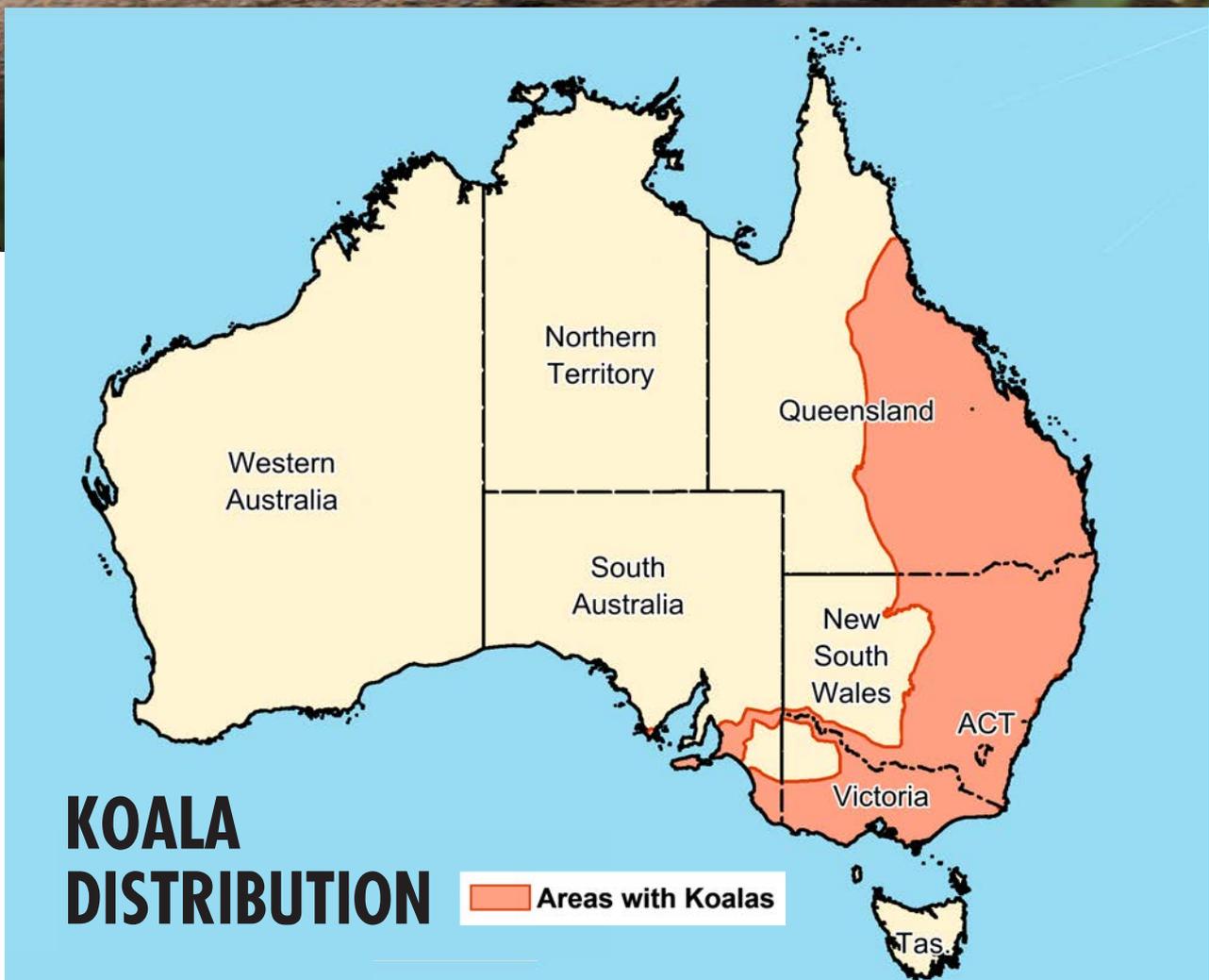
An Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) study found that Australia currently earns approximately \$3.2 billion per annum through Koala tourism. Seventy-five per cent of inbound tourists report they hope to see a Koala when making the decision to come to Australia. Koalas form the backbone of a lucrative tourism industry, which could be at risk if they become extinct.

# “If we can’t save the Koala, we can’t save anything.”

Koala forests cover 1.5 million square kilometres of our country, and there are millions of species living there. This is **20%** of the Australian continent.

At the moment, a shocking 1,700 threatened species are listed under the EPBC Act, waiting for a Recovery Plan. Let’s say each plan costs on average \$1 million. We have identified that more than 1,000 of these already listed species live in Koala forests.

Therefore if Koala forests are protected, it saves our Government a staggering \$1 billion.



# NATIONAL KOALA NUMBERS

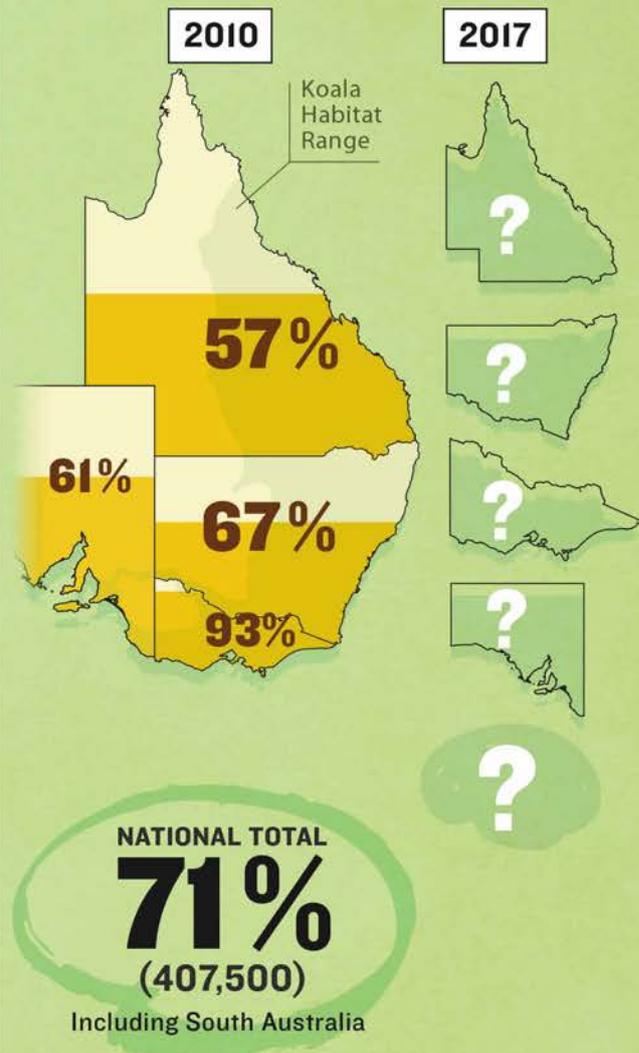
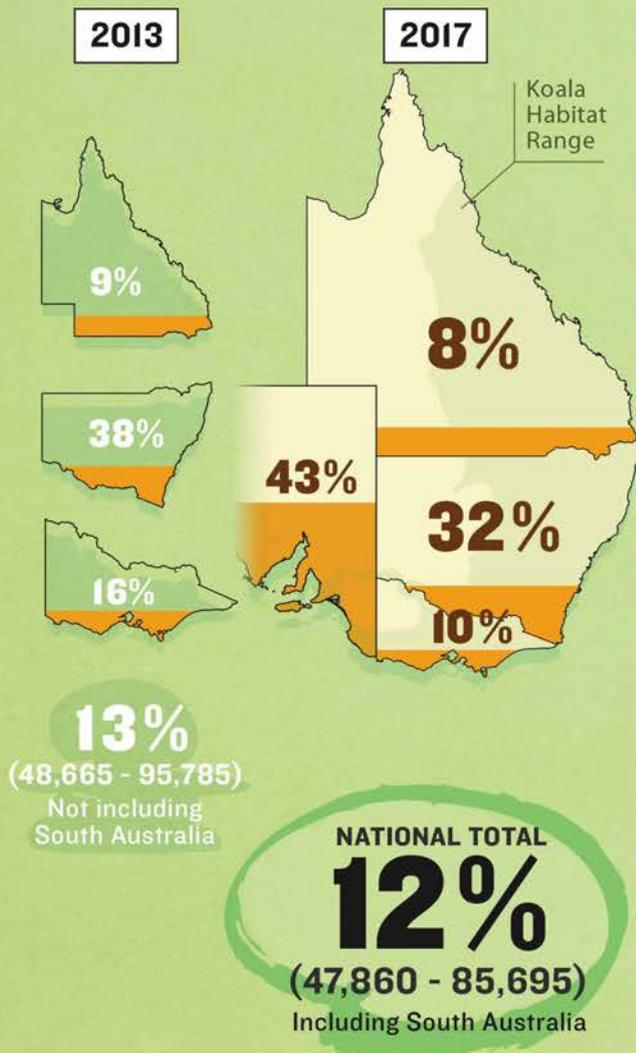




# How many Koalas are left?

## The Australian Koala Foundation

## The Australian Government



### research methodologies

- 2000 field sites in Australia
- 100,000 trees individually measured
- 25,000+ man hours
- \$10 Million Research
- KoalaMap

## Who is right?

All percentages are based on the Government number of approx. 573,400 left in the wild in 1990.

### research methodologies

See:  
'Phascolarctos cinereus (Koala) Listing Advice'  
P.30

^link:  
<http://environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/species/publications/197-listing-advice.pdf>



# Why does the Australian Koala Foundation estimate there are less Koalas than the Australian Government?

**1** The AKF has better science.

**2** The AKF has no political imperative to please industry.

**3** The AKF has a genuine desire to protect Koalas.

***AKF estimates in 2022 there are between 32,065 and 57,920 Koalas left in the wild. The Australian Government claims there are 407,500 Koalas left in the wild.***

Government figures are anywhere between 500% to 900% more than the AKF. This is a major discrepancy.

## ***How does AKF estimate Koala numbers?***

Counting Koalas is not an exact science. It would be impossible to physically go out and count all the Koalas in the 1.5 million square kilometres of Koala Habitat that occurs across our country.

The AKF uses the Koala Habitat Atlas (KHA), our long-term project that seeks to identify, rank and map all Koala habitats across Australia. It is based on \$15 million dollars of research conducted over 30 years; AKF has surveyed nearly 100,000 trees at 2,000 field sites across the Koala's range.

AKF numbers are based on a simple premise: Koalas need Koala habitat. The KHA allows us to identify the quality and quantity of the habitat remaining in the forests. AKF understands how Koalas use these habitats, and we use this information to predict how many Koalas are living in the forest. There is common sense to this approach – if there is no habitat, if the landscape is bleak, there cannot be any Koalas in significant numbers.

For each Federal Electorate we have identified the amount of Koala habitat remaining, our estimate for Koala numbers, and additional information to inform the public of specific issues confronting Koalas in that electorate.

We have asked each Federal member, if they think we are wrong, for them to provide the necessary science to readjust the figures

## ***How does The Australian Government count Koalas?***

To be honest, we don't really know – the Government has not released its counting methods to the AKF or anyone for that matter.

The AKF has seen bureaucrats and scientists counting Koalas on their fingers, 'back of the envelope' calculations from a handful of Government scientists (you can even sense this in transcripts from hearings for the Senate Inquiry into the status of the Koala in Melbourne, August 2011).

# Why hasn't the Koala been listed as a vulnerable species in Victoria and South Australia?

To be eligible for a Vulnerable listing under the federal laws, specifically the EPBC Act, Koalas had to have undergone a **30%** decline in numbers over 20 years. The Australian Government found they declined nationally by **29%**. Victorian and South Australian Koalas missed a federal listing by **1%**. Where is the science to support that 1%?

Government estimates of Koala numbers in Victoria – and nationally – have waxed and waned over many years. In 1995, the Government said there were **180,000** in the Strathbogie Ranges in Central Victoria.

It was acknowledged at the time that this figure was not based on any research, but simply the opinion of a Government researcher and the Government of the day accepted 180,000, citing that figure when

declining to list the Koala in 2006.

Then in 2010 numbers changed again to **73,000** Koalas, state-wide. There was international pressure to protect the Koala, and given that a Vulnerable listing would be dependent on population estimates from 1995, we assumed that the Victorian Government realised that the 1995 figure of 180,000 was far more than their 2010 figure of 73,000 Koalas.

## The Australian Government 1995-2010

# 180,000 Koalas

### Strathbogie Ranges, Central Victoria



### So what did they do?

They pretended that the 180,000 figure had never existed. All of a sudden it became **>100,000**, with caveats.

**> 100,000 Koalas**  
State-wide, Victoria 2010

And that would have been the end of things, if not for the 2011 Senate Inquiry into the Status of the Koala.

New research presented to the Senate Inquiry highlighted significantly lower Koala numbers in Western Queensland. As a result, Koala declines would be greater than 30% nationally, and the Koala seemed eligible for a national listing.

But that wouldn't work for the Federal Government... And so a new figure was plucked out of the air - the Victorian Koala population was not >100,000, but suddenly **200,000**.

Why then was 200,000 chosen as the new estimate?

If >100,000 had been used, national declines would have been **36%**, and the Koala would be eligible for listing nationally. The Victorian Koala population had to be boosted all the way to 200,000 to offset the declines in Western Queensland. With this new figure, national declines over 20 years fell back to **29%**, meaning the Koala was no longer eligible for protection in Victoria (and as a consequence, South Australia). You have to ask: Why the Government did not want that listing?



## The Australian Government 2011

**200,000 Koalas**

State-wide, Victoria

# SO HOW MANY KOALAS WERE THERE?

*Recent Australian Koala Foundation research has revealed at least 8 million Koalas were killed for the fur trade, with their pelts shipped to London, the United States and Canada between 1888 and 1927. The current population of approximately 60,000 wild Koalas in Australia represents only 1 per cent of those shot for the fur trade.*



Australian Koala Foundation

Despite being one of Australia's most recognisable animals, very little is known about the history and distribution of the Koala prior to the fur trade. In order to improve current management of the species it is vital that we better understand the impact of European Settlement on the Koala. Where did those Koalas come from? What did the distribution of Koalas look like before Europeans removed them in such vast numbers?

If you do not know where the Koalas were originally than how can you recover the species to its former status?

AKF opposes the pervasive myth in the scientific literature that Koalas historically occurred in small numbers. We do not believe this notion.

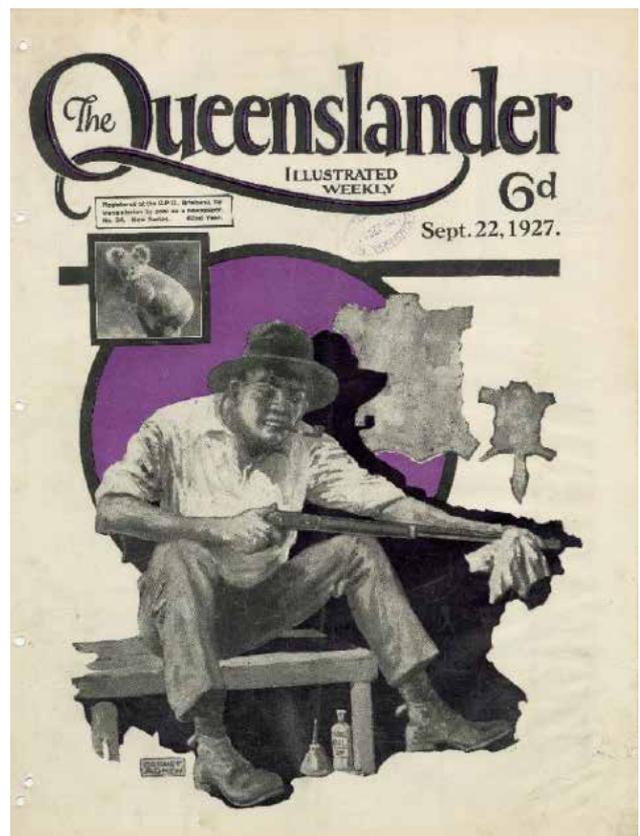
Ironically this thesis - which does the Koala no service - is derived from a single reference, an anecdotal paper written in 1948 by Harry Parris (Parris HS, 'Koalas on the lower Goulburn', Victorian Naturalist, 64, pp. 192-193, 1948).

Mr. Parris wrote a small paragraph that he thought Aborigines ate Koalas, and kept numbers low. Consequently, Koalas became more prevalent in the 1900s because white Australians had persecuted indigenous Australians.

Mr. Parris was in fact a tram engineer from Melbourne, but the scientific literature which emerged from his paper makes it appear that he was a learned scientist from times gone by. His small and insignificant comment has been regurgitated until it has been accepted.

AKF does not believe that Aboriginal people had such a profound effect on Koalas. AKF believes that the Koala was in robust and significant numbers at white settlement and the greed and economic imperative to exploit nature was in full swing for the next 200 years.

It is time for the past to be re-written more factually and more respectfully to the original custodians of Australia.

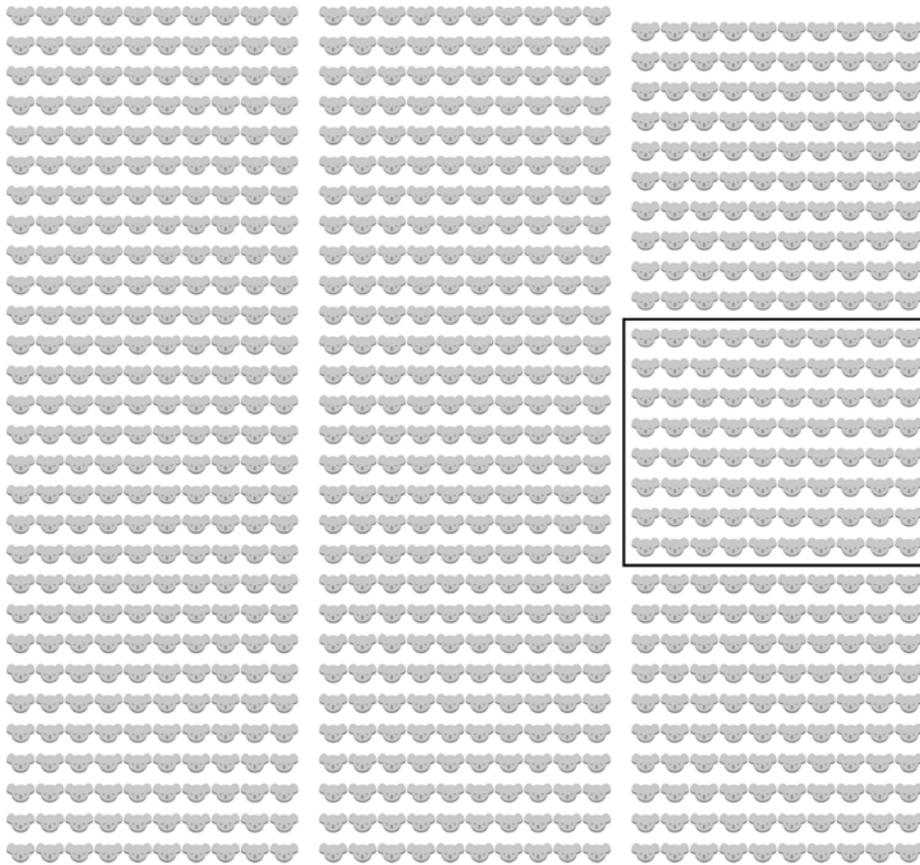


# THE KOALA FUR TRADE FACTS

- At least 8 million Koalas were killed for their fur between 1888 and 1927.
- Between 1888 and July 1918, at least 4,098,276 Koala furs passed through London auction houses. This figure does not include records from 1911 to 1914.
- Koalas were functionally extinct (not enough animals for the population to sustain itself) in South Australia by 1912.
- London was not the only market for Koala furs. Furs were also exported to markets such as the United States of America (USA) and Canada; in 1901, 400,000 furs were shipped from Adelaide to the USA.
- That was just the start: Nearly 2 million furs were exported in 1919, another 2 million in 1924.
- By the 1920s, Koalas reduced to a few hundred individuals in New South Wales and a thousand animals in Victoria. Only Queensland retained significant numbers.
- The catalyst for the end of the fur trade was August 1927 – ‘Black August’ – where nearly 800,000 Koalas were killed in Queensland in one month alone. 800,000 is approximately ten times the size of the current population of Koalas in Australia
- The Koala fur industry was not halted until President Herbert Hoover of the USA (while he was Secretary for Commerce) signed an order that year (1927) permanently prohibiting the importation of Koala skins into the USA.



**“At least 8 million Koalas were killed for their fur between 1888 and 1927.”**



 = **10,000**  
Koalas

***Black August***

**800,000** Koalas  
killed in 1 month  
in QLD in 1927



**More than**  
**8,000,000**  
Koala pelts exported  
between 1888 - 1927

**Less than**  
**90,000**  
Koalas remaining  
in the wild in 2018





# CURRENT LEGISLATION IS FAILING OUR KOALAS

*Australia's primary environmental legislation, the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act is failing to protect our environment, and the Koala is a perfect example.*

After a Senate Inquiry and 12 years of commitment from the Australian Koala Foundation, the Koala was listed as a vulnerable species under the EPBC Act in May 2012. But this listing has done nothing to stop habitat loss, or further decreases in Koala numbers.

In December 2013 the Department of the Environment released Draft referral Guidelines for the vulnerable Koala (since updated as the EPBC Act referral guidelines for the vulnerable koala). These were intended to inform industry about what kind of developments would have a significant impact on Koalas.

One element of this was the definition of 'habitat critical to the survival of the Koala.'



With those words, the EPBC Act should be able protect that land. Instead, there are a litany of instances where industry is still free to destroy 'habitat critical to the survival of the Koala.'

If a proposal is going to clear two hectares of land, it does not matter if that two hectares of land is the most important Koala habitat in the country, the EPBC Act will not stop the trees coming down. Land-clearing is recognized as a threatening process, but does not trigger the Act... How can that be?

How can the Government even pretend that the EPBC Act is working, if it cannot protect 'habitat critical to the survival of the Koala,' a listed threatened species and Matter of National Significance?

Under Article 8 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Federal Government is required to 'develop or maintain necessary legislation and/or other regulatory provisions for the protection of threatened species and populations.'

The EPBC Act isn't up to the job.

**“Industry is still free to destroy ‘habitat critical to the survival of the Koala.’”**



**The Koala Protection Act (KPA)** will provide a model for how to reconcile development and conservation. The KPA is simple but effective legislation that will work to protect the environment, and not hinder industry – if they do the right thing.

# URBAN DEVELOPMENT IS FAILING OUR KOALAS

LAND NOW SELLING

*return to nature*

Creating living environments for Queenslanders...

**RETURN TO NATURE**

***Poor urban development and planning legislation is wiping out our Koalas as it fails to protect their vital habitat.***

With Australia's councils raising on average more than 80 per cent of their revenue from rates, fines and service charges, it is no surprise local governments encourage development. Re-zoning land to allow development brings new rate-payers and new revenue for Council.

There is an inherent bias in the system that is fueling industry's expectation; if they own the land, they believe they are entitled to rezone it. AKF would argue that much of this land with high biological value shouldn't have been bought in the first place.

Existing State Koala protection legislation has proved powerless. The Senate Committee investigating the Status of the Koala in 2011 concluded the States were incapable of protecting the Koala.



In much of the country, two inadequate conditions are placed on clearing to protect Koalas: a Koala spotter is required during clearing to ensure no animals are in trees being felled, and sequential clearing, ostensibly to prevent Koalas getting isolated in the last patch of bush. They still do.

But when a Koala loses its home, where does it go?

If those Koalas survive the bulldozers, they will likely die as a result of a dog attack, car strike, or worse, slowly starve to death.

Councils suffer from insufficient mapping, poor legislative power, historical approvals, and green space loopholes. Weak development application conditions and enforcement are further exposing vital habitat to development.

The Australian Koala Foundation's model for Koala-friendly urban development, **Koala Beach** (see page 35), proves this doesn't have to be the case. Koala Beach has worked; 500 residential properties sit peacefully with Koalas. So why hasn't industry adopted the principles of Koala beach elsewhere? Why did the Property Council support the concept in the Senate Inquiry, but not in real life?

## “When a Koala loses its home, where does it go?”



# South East Queensland Koala Hospital Admissions



## a closer look...

at notes taken for individual hospital admissions



Graphs were compiled by AKF using data from: <https://data.qld.gov.au/dataset/koala-hospital-data>

# HOW THE CURRENT PLANNING APPROVAL SYSTEM FAILS KOALAS

- **A lack of legislative power at local government level** means Koala protection is only addressed in policy statements with no concrete solutions provided to protect vital habitat from development.
- **Ministerial discretion** allows for State Ministers to override councils' planning decisions, in some cases over-ruling concerns about impacts on Koala populations and allowing developments to proceed.
- **Poor to non-existent government mapping** is one of the main causes of Koala population decline – if vital habitat remains unidentified, then it remains unprotected and open to clearing.
- **Historical loopholes** continue to provide open-ended approvals, effectively giving industry a free rein to knock down Koala trees. A sunset clause, ensuring these approvals expire after a period of time if the development has not progressed, is desperately needed.
- If the floodplain is a cow paddock, and the high ground is Koala habitat, industry will successfully convince Government the floodplain should be the greenspace, and the high ground be cleared for housing. Drainage lines disguised on paper as “green”, or conservation space, are far too common.
- **Poorly defined legislation terminology** also provides loopholes for industry.
- In the development approvals process ‘no’ rarely means ‘no’. Project managers simply grind down the system; they may have to wait years for approval, may have to get told ‘no’ again and again, but a single ‘yes’ and it’s all over.
- Finally, **dysfunctional processes in all levels of government** confuses authorities’ roles and responsibilities. The knock-on effect of this is their failure to properly police and enforce planning and development guidelines.



# THE KOALA PROTECTION ACT

**will provide a model for how to reconcile development and conservation.**

- Rather than relying on mapping alone to identify Koala habitat, the KPA will reference a tree list; if a tree on the site is a species cited in that tree list, it is protected under the KPA.
- The KPA will require the proponents demonstrate their impact on Koalas and Koala habitat will be benign.



**THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A  
KOALA-FRIENDLY  
ROAD**



*Eighty-five per cent of Koalas hit by a car die. Between 1997 and 2013, more than 8,000 Koalas died in South East Queensland as a result of cars.*

That's the official story; but it is estimated that for every dead Koala recovered, another two (or more) crawl off into the bush to die, never to be seen.

Vehicle mortality is highest where roads cut through Koala habitat. The faster the speed limit, the greater the threat to Koalas.

Not only do roads increase the risk of vehicle strike, they also increase the risk from dogs. Roads help dogs access Koala habitat, while forcing Koalas down from their trees and across open ground.

Research conducted by the Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) shows that Koala populations within 2km of a disturbance such as a new road, are likely to become extinct. Mortality and habitat fragmentation are driving these localized extinctions.

And yet, we build a new road rather than upgrade an existing road.



### **Why?**

Economics. The cheapest option is not to upgrade the existing highway. Instead a whole new road is built, because the "bush costs nothing" to knock down. But what is the cost long-term?

Building through existing bush often means cutting straight through important and critical Koala Habitat.

## **The Koala Protection Act**

**The Koala Protection Act (KPA)** will protect Koalas and Koala habitat by ensuring that new infrastructure will be designed to ensure a benign impact on local and regional Koalas.



**OUR NATIONAL PARKS  
ESTATE IS DWARFED BY THE  
MINING ESTATE**

*The average Australian has no idea the impact mining is having on our country.*

Outside the major urban centres, mining licenses and exploration permits cover vast tracts of the landscape. Much of this is Koala habitat.

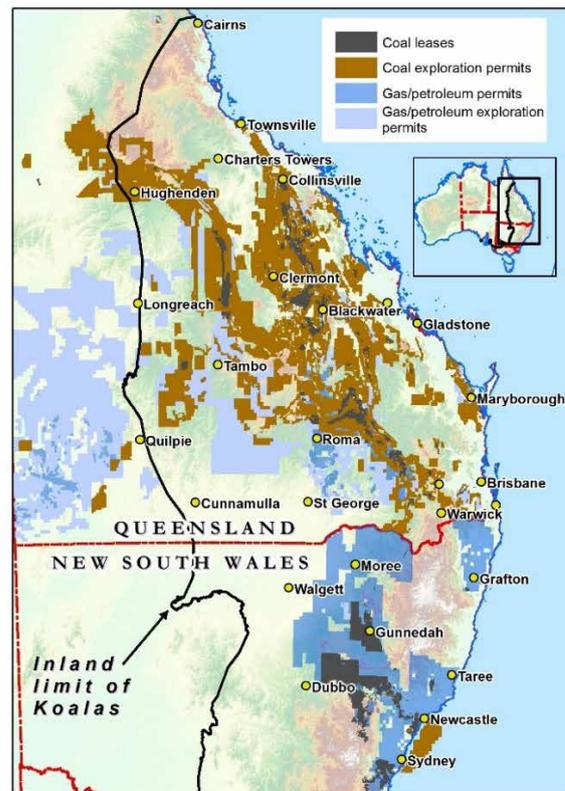
Our National Park system currently manages 28 million hectares of land, nearly 4 per cent of Australia. By comparison, gas and coal mines in QLD and NSW alone account for 2.7 per cent of Australia.

There are currently gas and coal exploration permits covering more than 39 per cent of Queensland and New South Wales – in Koala habitat. That equates to 13 per cent of Australia.

Despite a naïve perception that Koalas are safe in the bush, as you head west of the Great Dividing Range, mining is one of the most significant threats to the Koala's survival.

With mining comes additional infrastructure: the roads and rail lines, storage facilities and tailings ponds. Not to mention CSG – a veritable spider's web – developments everywhere - thrown like a blanket over the land.

There is little evidence of compliance or proper policing. And if a breach is detected, often the penalty is a slap on the wrist – particularly in comparison to the money the mine is making.



## The Koala Protection Act

**The Koala Protection Act (KPA)** will insist on independent consultants providing advice to Government, and make sure that community concerns are met.



# HOW DID THIS KOALA GET CHOPPED IN HALF?

*All levels of Government are shirking their responsibility when it comes to the loss of Australia's iconic Koala's habitat.*

The creation of Regional Forestry Agreements (RFAs) almost two decades ago made forestry management in RFA areas a state or territory responsibility.

As a result, forestry activities conducted under an RFA are exempt from Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act) obligations, effectively eliminating any Federal protection for the Koala.



Local councils don't like to get involved. While State Government does attempt to regulate forestry activities, in most instances this regulation is inefficient and enforcement is weak.

Sadly, the only time anyone acts in the Koala's best interests is when shamed into action by the media.

RFAs were brought into place because

industry wanted security. Koalas were not even considered, then or now. RFAs are supposedly up for review and renewal, but they are words, not actions. Forestry conservation groups continue to highlight breaches, but nothing changes.

This Koala, cut in half, was in a RFA area. AKF believes this system is completely broken and the KPA must override forestry agendas.

## The Koala Protection Act

The Australian Koala Foundation has already conducted research into forestry and Koalas. We identified simple measures, such as shelter corridors, which could dramatically reduce the slaughter. The problem is that the forestry industry has chosen to ignore the research, and allow the Koala deaths to continue. Under a Koala Protection Act (KPA), industry will be required to show that their operations have a benign impact on Koalas.



# The 'Queensland Clause'

Why does Southeast Queensland has a specific clause in the EPBC Act, which ensures Koalas do not have any Federal protection from forestry activities?

When the EPBC Act was introduced, a clause was included to exempt areas like South East Queensland, where negotiations around an RFA were already in progress (Section 40). When that RFA was signed, it would presumably introduce protections for Matters of National significance. The problem is, that agreement was never signed. And yet, the exemptions remain.

The AKF has made enquiries to the Federal Government in regards to clearing for forestry that is having a significant impact on habitat critical to the survival of the Koala. These enquiries resulted in a statement that "the Department is unable to intervene in this matter." And this exemption holds for any lands used for forestry in South East QLD, not just those areas that were proposed for forestry activity under the RFA that was never signed.

Basically Queensland got singled out with a special deal – all the benefits of a RFA (no EPBC Act oversight), with none of the costs.





# IS ENDORSED WOOD REALLY KOALA-FRIENDLY?

*The Australian Koala Foundation has lost confidence in forestry product certification*

Certification should foster a safe habitat for our Koalas; protection of biodiversity, species at risk and wildlife habitat is a core aim.

Yet industry members fail to demonstrate any commitment to Koala management, and forestry operations continue to kill Koalas in routine logging.

The AKF supports good forestry operations with strong sustainable practices that demonstrate this commitment in an accountable and transparent way. Our experience suggests that current practice in the forestry industry is a long way from this ideal.

Companies fail to monitor Koala deaths. Companies do not release their koala monitoring data to auditors. Consultation means little more than a phone call so they can 'tick the box.'

**The Koala Protection Act (KPA)** would require forestry to properly fulfil their obligations towards Koalas. This would give legal certainty and restore confidence in endorsed wood products.



# GOOD MAPPING AND TREE SPECIES LISTS WILL PROTECT KOALAS

*Good mapping is critical to protecting Koalas and Koala Habitat.*

Governments and councils simply cannot protect Koalas and Koala habitat, if they don't know where to look.

Unfortunately, much of Governments' Koala mapping is not up to scratch.

Maps are only as good as the data used to create them; accuracy, resolution and scale can all determine a map's usefulness. This can have dramatic consequences for Koala protection.

The Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) has spent more than 20 years and \$15 million developing the Koala Habitat Atlas – an effort to identify, map and rank all remaining Koala habitat in Australia.

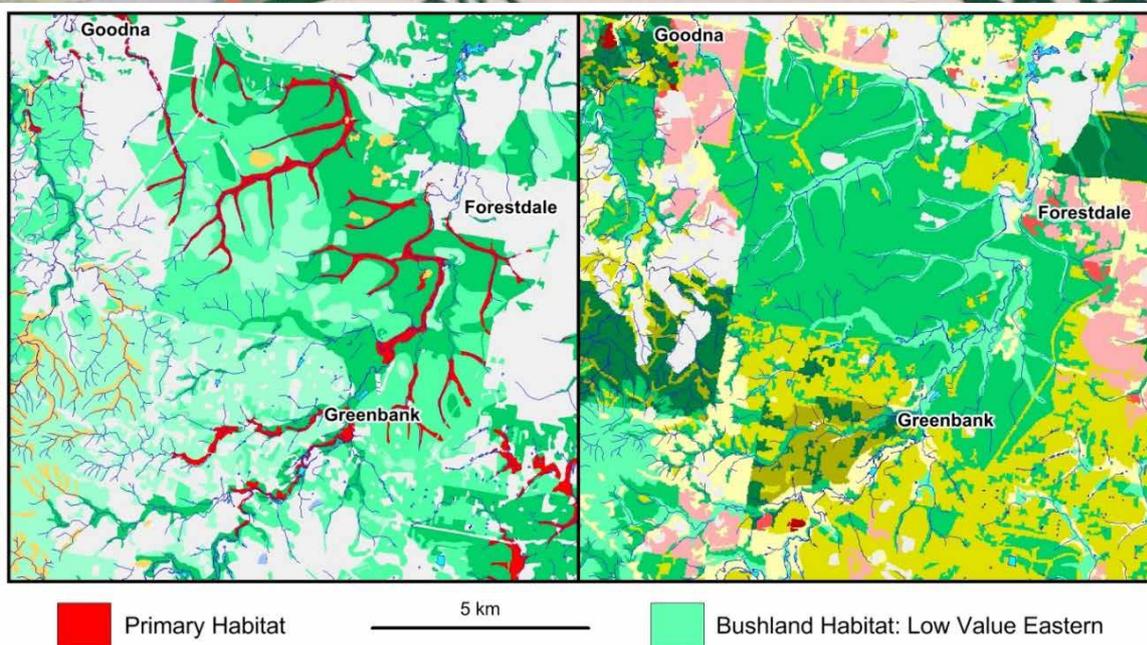
Licensing is already available.



### Koala Habitat Atlas Classes

- Primary Habitat
- Secondary Habitat (Class A)
- Secondary Habitat (Class B)
- Secondary Habitat (Class C)
- Unknown Habitat Value

All trees identified by Australian Koala Foundation mapping will be protected by the Koala Protection Act. This will provide certainty for both Koalas and development proponents.



Contrasting habitat maps. AKF's Koala Habitat Atlas maps (left) show riparian areas as high value areas for Koalas. The areas are classified as 'Primary Habitat' which we believe is critically important to Koalas. The Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management's Koala Habitat Values Map (right) instead shows this crucial habitat as 'low value.' Who is right?

# IS GOVERNMENT GETTING GOOD ADVICE?

*Is there a conflict of interest when the 'independent' environmental consultants Federal Government relies on to provide advice about development proposals are paid by industry?*

Could it be that consultants have a financial interest to ensure that development applications are approved?

It is highly unlikely that consultants would recommend anything other than the development's approval. If a consultant says anything that might stop the approval of a development, they will probably never work again.

Compounding the problem is the fact that environmental legislation is often based on opinion rather than clear facts. Consultants do not have to show development will not have an impact; they just have to say they believe there will not be an impact.

Unlike many professions, environmental consultants have no governing body. Consultants do not need to be registered. There are no clear regulations or codes of conduct, and no disciplinary body.

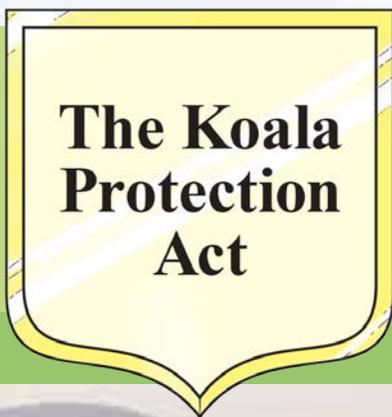


How then can the opinion of environmental consultants be considered independent?

In some cases these 'independent' consultants are failing in their duty to properly assess proposed developments and the Federal Government either lacks the expertise to identify problems, or simply does not care.



This area of bushland was mapped by consultants as the critically endangered White box woodland ecological community. The consultant got it wrong – these trees are narrow-leaved ironbark. Why does this matter? This area is a proposed offset. The proponent planned to clear an area of critically endangered White box woodland, and offered to compensate for clearing by protecting this relatively common vegetation.



**The Koala Protection Act (KPA)** will require truly independent environmental assessments, removing conflicts of interest. It will ensure that decision makers are provided with high-quality, accurate information.

# KOALA BEACH

## A MODEL FOR KOALA-FRIENDLY DEVELOPMENT





***Residents in Australia's only Koala-friendly urban development say 'living amongst wildlife and respecting nature makes us richer and happier'.***

The Koala-friendly urban design principles in place at Pottsville's Koala Beach development have also had a profoundly beneficial impact on the environment as a whole.

This outstanding development, conceived in 1994 by the Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) in partnership with the Ray Group (a Gold Coast based developer), proves that the Koala Protection Act could *shape*, rather than prevent, development.

Koala Beach is now home to 500 residential properties. The site was home to not just Koalas, but also 25 species of endangered or rare flora and fauna, each protected under the initiatives put in place at Koala Beach.

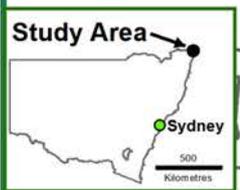
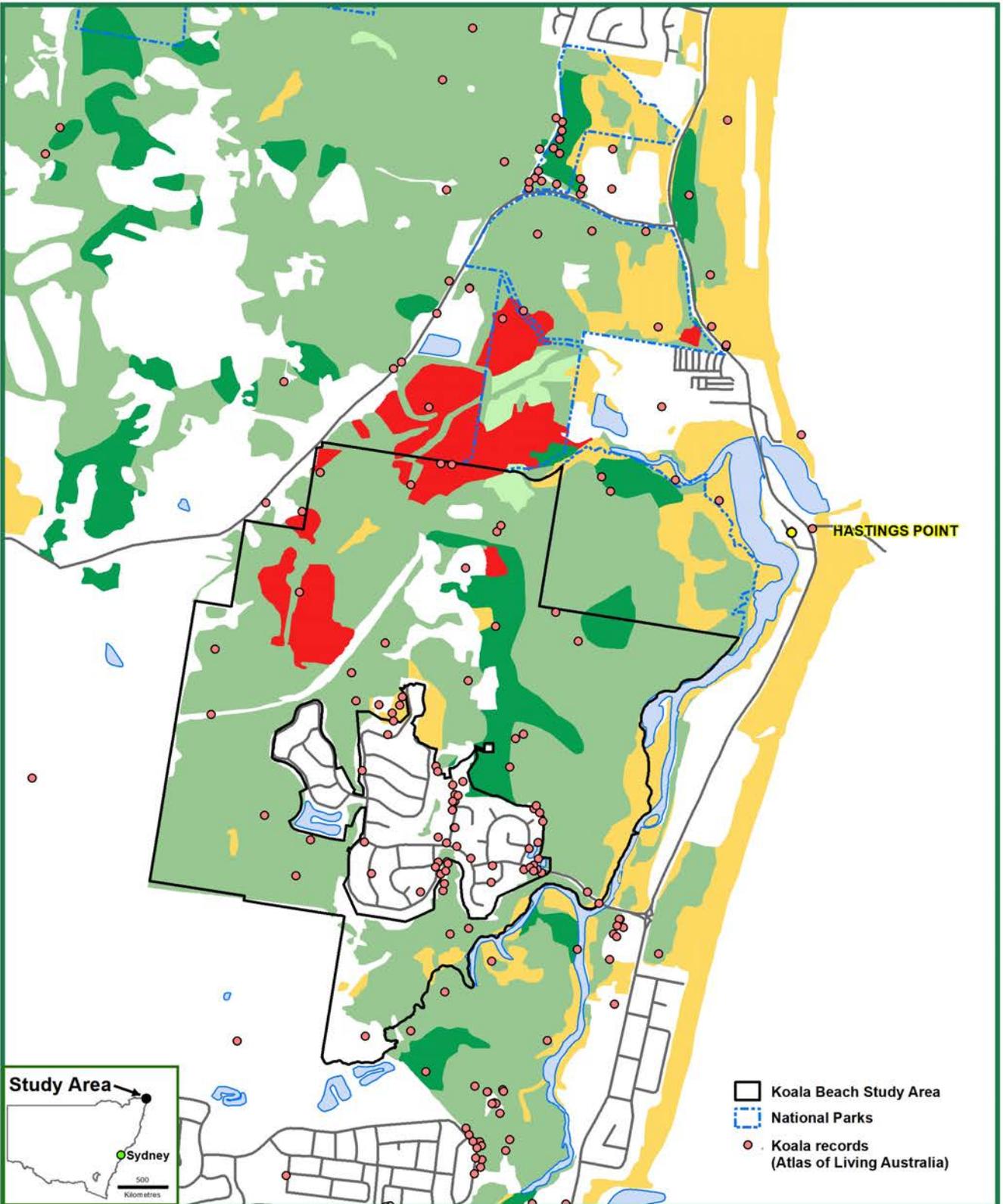
After 25 years of development, Koalas still live in safety at Koala Beach. We can go out and find the descendants of the Koalas that lived at the site back in 1993.

Council and Koala Hospital records have indicated very little evidence that the two key Koala threats associated with development - cars and dogs - had affected the local population.

During the 2011 Senate Inquiry, Koala Beach was identified by the Property Council of Australia as a model for successful restoration of Koala habitat, and the 'coexistence of wildlife and humans.' Why then hasn't that model been replicated anywhere else in the Country?

## **Koala Beach demonstrates it is possible to build houses while minimising our impact on local Koala populations.**

<sup>1</sup> Property Council of Australia (Residential Development Council). 2011 Response to question taken on notice from the Senate Inquiry into the status, health and sustainability of Australia's Koala population (from public hearing, Canberra 19 May 2011). <https://senate.aph.gov.au/submissions/committees/viewdocument.aspx?id=f46df8ad-7d00-4e51-800c-1f77d7fc5d9f>



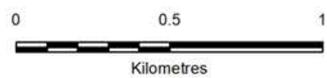
- Koala Beach Study Area
- National Parks
- Koala records (Atlas of Living Australia)

- Koala Habitat Classes**
- Primary Habitat
  - Secondary Habitat (Class A)
  - Secondary Habitat (Class B)
  - Secondary Habitat (Class C)
  - Other vegetation
  - Water body



## Koala Beach Study Area

Based on OEH/Tweed Shire mapping



GDA94 MGA Zone 56

KHA © AKF 2018  
Other data © OEH & PSMA

# The Principles Behind KOALA BEACH

## Key elements of the Koala Beach estate include:

1

The retention of the majority of Koala Habitat on the site (the total area of the estate is approximately 365 hectares, and nearly 272 hectares has been devoted to environmental protection: **75%**).

2

Rehabilitation works, including planting a Koala food tree on the footpath outside each residence.

3

A prohibition on dogs and cats on the estate.

4

Measures to mitigate against the impact of traffic through the estate (warning signage, speed bumps).

5

Fencing restrictions (a gap of 30cm is required at the bottom of all non-pool fences, to allow animals to move freely through the estate).

6

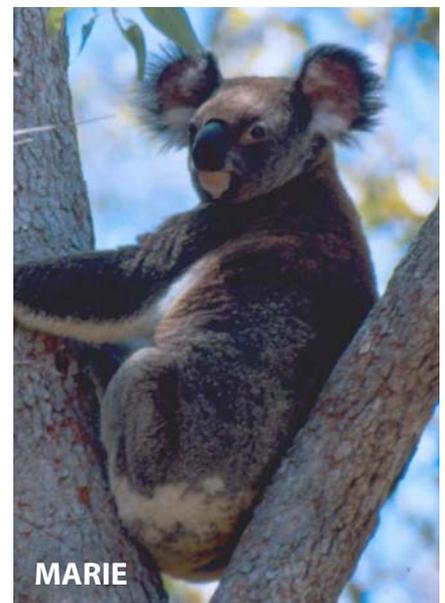
The establishment of a management committee (funded through a resident levy) to manage the implementation of conservation initiatives.

## The Koala Protection Act

Koala Beach demonstrates it is possible to build houses under the **Koala Protection Act** (KPA) while minimising our impact on local Koala populations.

# A TALE OF THREE KOALAS

Arnie, Marie and Lulu are fanciful names given to three Koalas in a socially stable breeding population in Koala Beach whose home-ranging behaviour has been intensely studied over a period of 12 months. The beauty of the following stories and hypothetical examples is that the population is real, not made up. They illustrate the social organisation of a small population which is breeding successfully. The land is used in such a way as to have each individual animal's home range overlapping with its neighbour. They fit neatly together like a jigsaw puzzle.



For the purposes of this story, only Arnie, Marie and Lulu have been named. The other Koalas are just shown on the following diagrams to be male or female, and numbered M1 (male one), F1 (female one) and so on.

**Arnie** (named after Arnold Schwarzenegger) thanks to his size, fitness and muscular torso is currently the dominant male in this population. He weighs 10 kg, is probably 4-5 years of age and has by far the largest home range in the group, overlapping with the home range of four breeding females. Much of his home range is treeless land, and therefore was not chosen for access to food but rather for access to females.

**Marie** currently has a weaned baby living within her own home range, and another baby in the pouch. Her home range is overlapped by that of Arnie, as well as another subordinate male (M2) and another female (F3) with weaned young. Arnie's home range also overlaps that of F3 and, like Marie, she is pregnant to Arnie.

It make evolutionary sense that if you were a female Koala, you would try to find the biggest, strongest male to mate with so that your baby carried the strongest genes. Arnie is 10kg of muscle – a magnificent specimen of a koala; strong, fit and healthy.

**Lulu**, travelled approximately 1 km (a long way for a little Koala) out of her own home range to mate with Arnie. We can only assume that she was in oestrus, and, despite the fact that his home range overlaps hers, he was not there when she wanted to mate so she chased him all the way to where he was at the time (in Marie's home range) and they mated there. Unlike males, females tolerate the presence of other strange females in their territory, but not indefinitely.



You will see in the diagram how males (especially dominant males) have home ranges which are larger than those of females and which overlap with usually more than one female. Arnie's home range is a classic example of the large size of a dominant male's domain; it is 33 hectares in area, while M2's home range is only 17.6 hectares. While much of Arnie's home range is bare of trees, it covers the home ranges of the maximum number of females as possible. During the breeding season, Arnie regularly traverses the length (1 km) and breadth (300-400 metres) of his home range in a night.

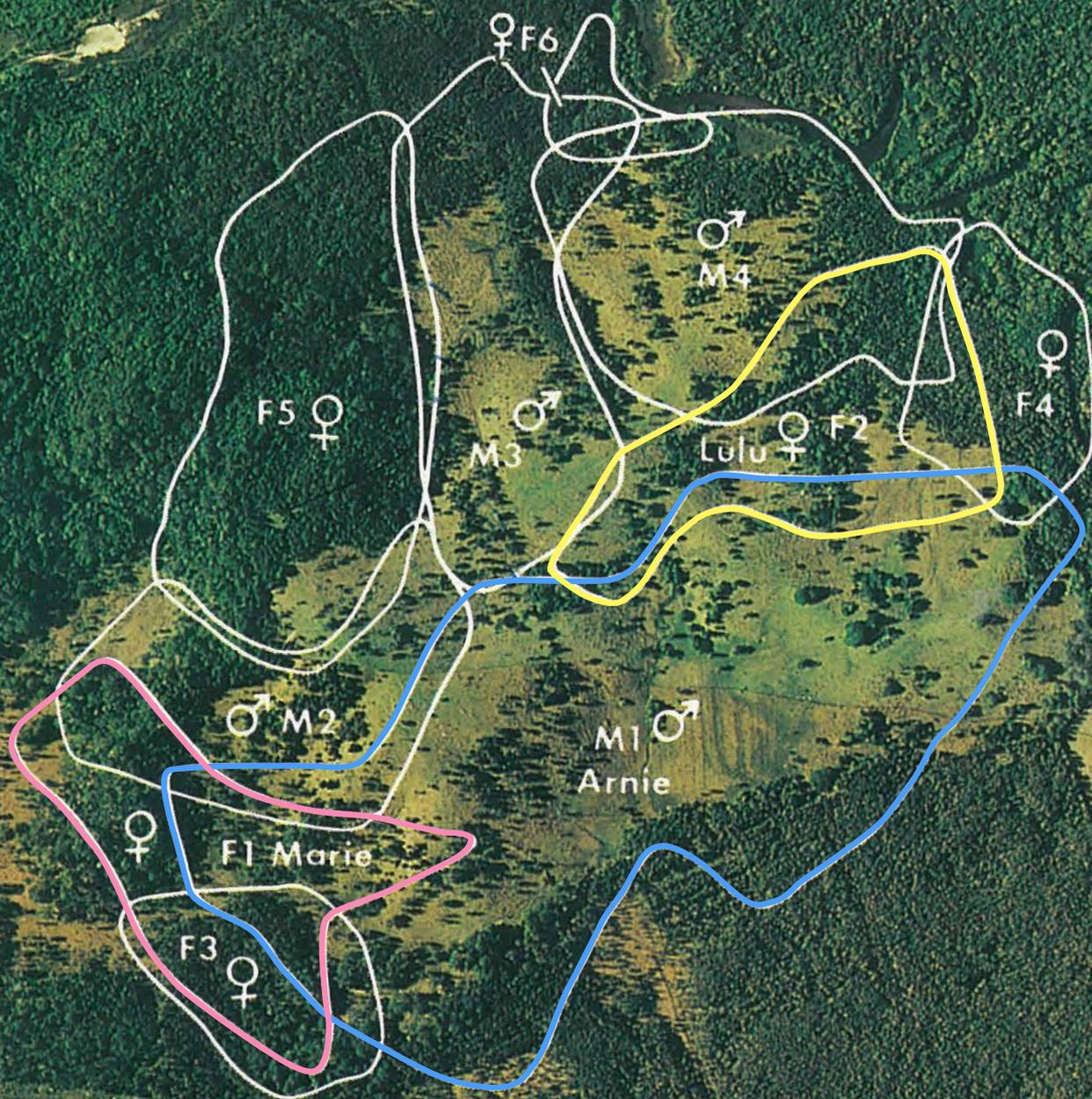
The boundaries of the animals F4, M4 and F6 are defined by the creek line, and they abut those of their neighbouring Koalas.

Continuing study shows how the animals interact with one another. For example, Arnie and M2 share a tree in common with Marie, which could suggest that their ranges 'overlap' but, in reality, they never visit that tree at the same time. There is no confrontation and they are careful to avoid one another, but the tree is common nevertheless and serves to allow them to maintain large enough home ranges.

Koalas are popularly thought to use mainly eucalyptus trees, but by looking at every tree, regardless of species, field work for the Koala Habitat Atlas is beginning to show that Koalas spend just as much time in species of non-eucalypts as they do in eucalypts. They may not eat as much foliage from other trees, but they are using them nonetheless. This illustrates the importance of knowing exactly which trees Koalas use so as not to attempt to protect the wrong ones, or protect an inadequate number of trees. Some trees provide a cool resting place on a hot day rather than food, a role which is equally important to the Koala's whole life.

A very interesting thing happened during the course of the study which concerned Lulu, the female who chased Arnie to mate. She swam the creek and travelled south, covering a distance of approximately 2 km. She stayed in the vicinity of her destination for a day or two and then returned, covering the 2 km and swimming the creek again to return to her own home range. She made this foray on four different occasions in the space of one month. We do not know the reason for this, but our hypothesis is that she may have been visiting her mother's home range – the places where she grew up – possibly to show Mum the new baby in her pouch. This is only speculation, but it makes a lovely story.





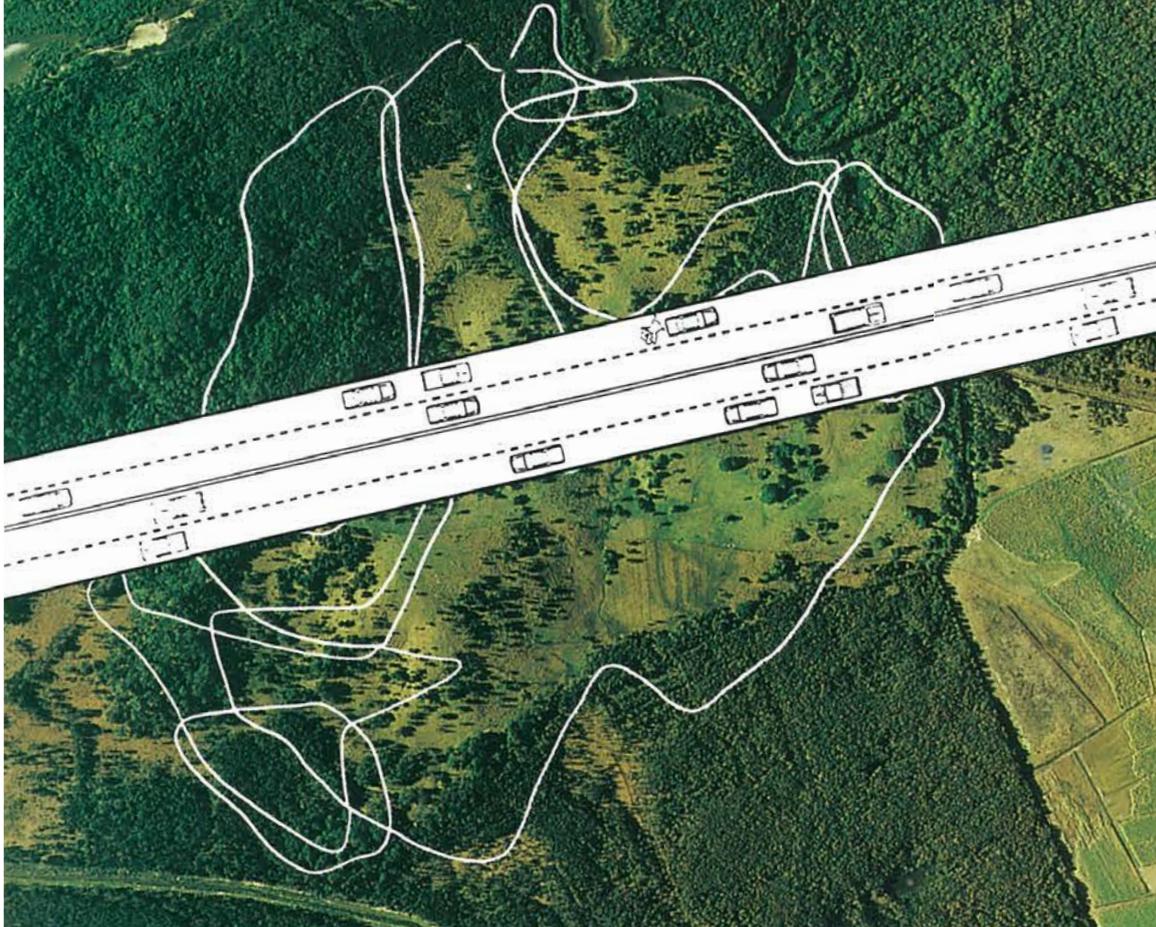
MARIE



ARNIE



LULU

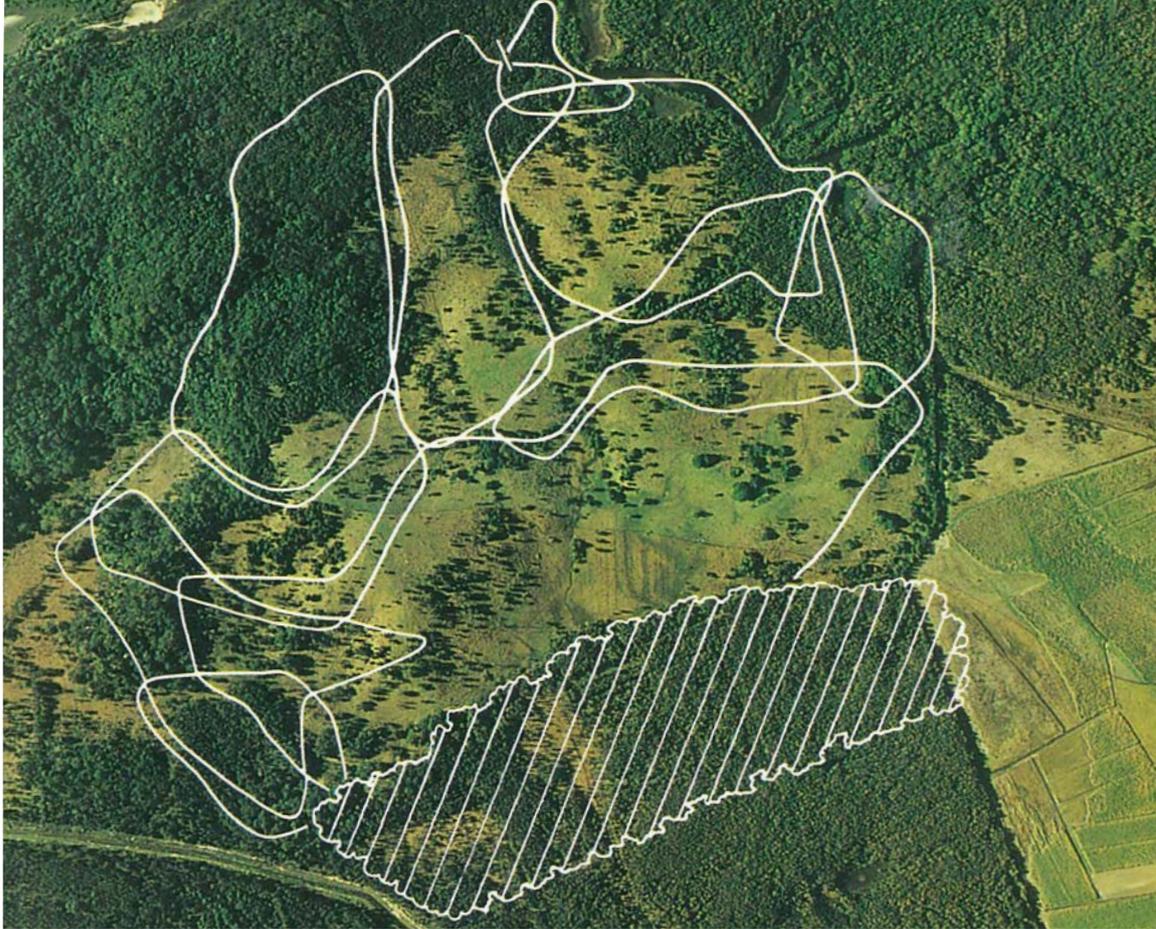


### **Hypothetical Case 1: Four-lane highway**

The diagram below illustrates how a four-lane highway would seriously affect this Koala population. For the purposes of this example, we have placed it arbitrarily through the middle of the population, but no matter where it is placed, if it cuts through a breeding population such as this, a road will have a major impact.

It is easy to see how such a road would cut off contact between Arnie and Lulu as well as Arnie and F4. It would also cut off contact between M2 and F5. It cuts through the home ranges of more than half the population. If they survived the initial impact of building the road, not only would the area available to each of them be reduced, but their normal ranging movements would bring them into direct contact with the road and motor vehicles. For any Koala living adjacent to a road, it is only a matter of time before it will be hit by a passing car or truck.

When something like a road is built through their habitat, Koalas do not just move away for a while and then return later. Adjoining habitat is already occupied and surviving Koalas will stay 'at home', trying to survive on a greatly reduced food resource and in constant danger of being run over. Koalas not directly affected by the road will be gradually affected by the dissolution of the social group to which they belong.



### **Hypothetical Case 2: Corridor**

The 'corridor' marked here was almost a reality. The local council which governs the area where this Koala population lives, drew a 'wildlife corridor' on the map which was to be retained to support the Koala population on the site. The whole area occupied by the population was to be given over to a housing development. The proposed corridor was 120 metres wide, a seemingly generous donation of space, and from a lay-person's perspective, could be assumed to support Koalas.

Such planning decisions are made regularly with little understanding of simple biology. The trees in the proposed 'corridor' were not even the right species to support Koalas, let alone cover an adequate acreage to support a population.

Had this 'corridor' of land been retained and the rest of the site cleared, the Koala population would have been destroyed. Alone, it is not even the size of Arnie's home range, and it would not have facilitated the movement of the local Koala population as it was supposedly designed to do. Without understanding the Koala's home ranging behaviour, it is clear how easily decisions can be made to protect the wrong places.

# THE AKF IS 100% OPPOSED TO OFFSETS

*Environmental offsets are allowing big industry to clear valuable, established Koala habitat and replace it with little more than the promise of trees to be planted elsewhere.*

Under current policies at all levels of Government, Koala habitat trees can be “offset” through another activity such as planting new trees to restore land elsewhere, but this concept has serious flaws.

The AKF is 100 per cent opposed to offsets.

Koalas cannot be offset along with their habitat. Koalas have an area of trees they live in and their own territory or home range that they roam in.

Imagine if you come home tonight and your house has been destroyed. If you are lucky and you get translocated to another house miles away - and if no one is already living there - you might be allowed to stay. If not, you are then told, well, we will build you a new one. But it will take ten years. Does anyone really take this seriously?

These promised newly planted offset trees could not provide suitable shelter or food for 10-20 years.

Offsetting also allows for the destruction of valuable land in exchange for provisions of poor land.

Nature Reserves are supposed to conserve ‘examples of our natural landscapes and native plants and animals for future generations,’ and provide ‘the nation’s natural safety net against our biggest environmental challenges.’

But the Federal Government is giving proponents the green light to bulldoze these Nature Reserves– for nothing more than a promise of new offset lands that have neither been identified nor secured.

# "Offsets merely sanitise the destruction of Koala habitat."

Our Nation's environment is being constantly diminished - through urban development, road development, mining and forestry - and these offsets are supposed to replace that lost environmental capital. The effectiveness of those offsets remains extremely uncertain.

Development proponents across the country are exaggerating the value of their offsets.

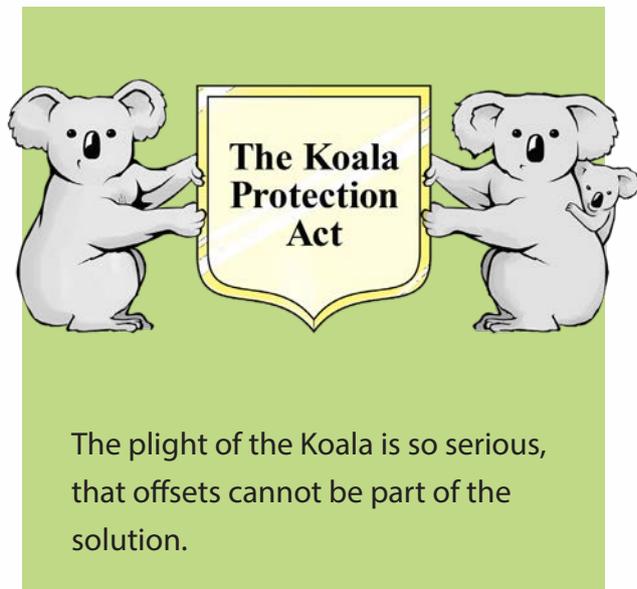
Policing offset conditions to ensure full delivery appears to be non-existent.

These offsets may very well be nothing more than hot air. We may not be able to replace and recreate the habitats that we have lost.

Offsets merely sanitise the destruction of Koala Habitat. The Koala cannot afford to wait 20 or more years for offsets to bring back the trees, or the thousands of years required to restore the ecology of our forests.



An offset site for a major infrastructure project. These trees, planted to offset habitat loss elsewhere, are on land already earmarked for a future arterial road. As an offset, they are worthless.



The plight of the Koala is so serious, that offsets cannot be part of the solution.



# KOALA TREES ARE CARBON IN THE BANK

*Despite Australia's pledges to reduce carbon emissions, our Governments are allowing the clearing of our best carbon storage.*

Koala trees – the Eucalypt forests of Australia – have been shown to be some of the important stores of carbon in the world.

Since 1788, when Europeans first settled in Australia, nearly 80 per cent of the Koala forests of Australia have been cleared.

The remainder is under constant threat from land clearing for agriculture, urban development, mining, road development and unsustainable forestry practices.

But the loss of these forests also has wider implications for our climate; as Koala forests

grow, they sequester carbon dioxide in their wood, locking it away from the atmosphere.

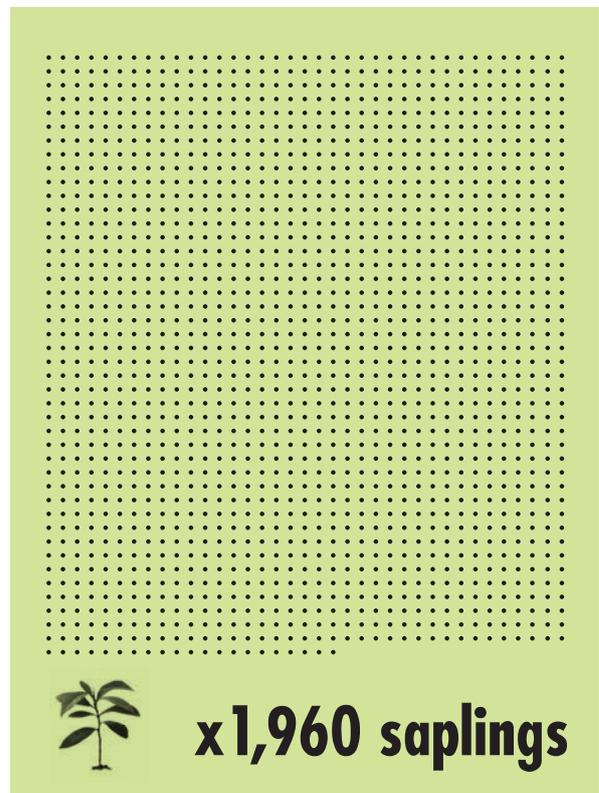
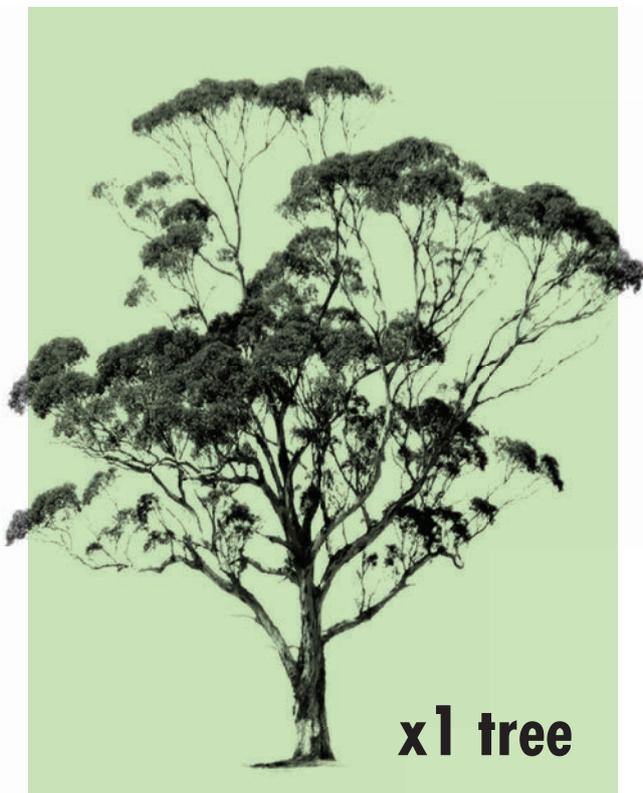
It will be impossible to replace the carbon in those forests if they are destroyed.

Protect the forests, conserve the koala, and Australians will benefit from the range of services those forests provide to our society: tourism dollars, water purification and erosion control, sources of pharmaceutical and industrial products, and cultural comforts among others.

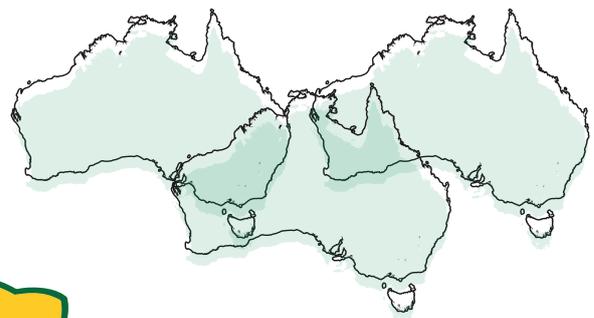
Planting new saplings will not counteract the removal of existing forests. Any politician thinking that planting millions of trees will solve the carbon problem does not understand basic natural science. 20 million saplings would only offset the loss of carbon from felling 10,000 trees. And that happens every day.

Larger trees grow faster, and sequester carbon more rapidly than younger trees. Newly planted trees will take a decade or more to contribute to the fight against climate change. In the short term, planting 20 million is a futile gesture if we continue to clear our forests.

A tree the size of a telegraph pole contains about 1 tonne of carbon. To replace that carbon, you would need to plant about 2,000 new saplings. This would require 2000 square metres.



2,000 new saplings would require 2000 square metres. If the Koala forests of Australia were cleared, it would require 22.5 trillion trees to replace the carbon. It would need an area equivalent to three times the total area of Australia.





# ECO-TOURISM IS AT RISK



Australian Koala Foundation

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

***Whether munching on the gum leaves or snoozing in their trees, Australia's Koalas form the backbone of a lucrative tourism industry earning around \$3.2 billion annually.***

The Australian Koala Foundation's (AKF) study, *The Economic Value of the Koala*, found the Koala is also responsible for generating around **30,000** tourism industry jobs.

This figure places the Koala on par with other major Australian tourist drawcards, such as the Great Barrier Reef (\$6.4 billion per annum) and the Sydney Opera House (\$4.6 billion per annum).

'Celebrity species' such as the Koala are true Australian icons, and a critical part of the engine driving our tourism industry.

Seventy-five per cent of inbound tourists report they hope to see a Koala when making the decision to come to Australia.

But almost none of that \$3.2 billion has been reinvested into conserving Koalas and their habitat.

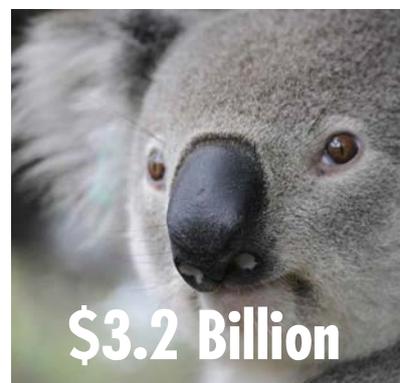
If the Koala becomes extinct, that \$3.2 billion per annum and those 30,000 jobs would disappear.

If we want to protect Koalas along with our tourism industry that benefits from them, we must protect Koala habitat.

The tourism industry must recognise the importance of securing the future of this economic resource and conserving the Koala in its natural habitat.

It's now time for our Tourism Ministers to be aware of the implications of the loss of Koalas from our country, and support the Koala Protection Act.

The Koala Protection Act will not just protect the Koala, but will also protect Australia's eco-tourism sector.



# DEAD TREES ON CAPE OTWAY

**According to State and Federal Government, Victoria now has an “overabundance of Koalas.” Really?**

Koala management in Victoria has been confounded and let down by this notion for years and years, perhaps ever since the figure of 180,000 Koalas in the Strathbogie Ranges was first bandied around in 1995.

We can see this currently playing out on Cape Otway. This is what AKF thinks is happening in Cape Otway and what has plagued Victorian translocation programs for nearly 80 years.

In different soil types Koalas eat different species, but, if we can use the human food pyramid as an example - they need meat, potatoes, pumpkin, beans, peaches, ice cream and a dinner mint.

In healthy Victorian habitats, Koalas will have a varied diet from a range of food trees. There is the meat (the primary Koala food species) – in Victoria these are species such as monkey gum, common manna gum and river red gum.

The meat is served with vegetables (the secondary Koala food species): potatoes (blue gum), pumpkin (coastal manna gum), carrots (messmate) and beans (brown stringybark). And the meal is rounded off with ice cream (swamp gum), maybe some pudding (mountain ash) and an after-dinner mint (narrow leaved peppermint). Yes, the mint is actually a mint!

This diversity is important, both for the Koala, but also for the trees to keep them healthy.

Note that most people think that manna gum is just manna gum, but there are in fact two different types of manna gum that grow in the Otways. Koalas vastly prefer the common manna gum, which does not grow on the soils found on Cape Otway. Then there is coastal manna gum, which does grow on the poorer sandy soils of Cape Otway. It is not a primary food source for Koalas in Victoria.

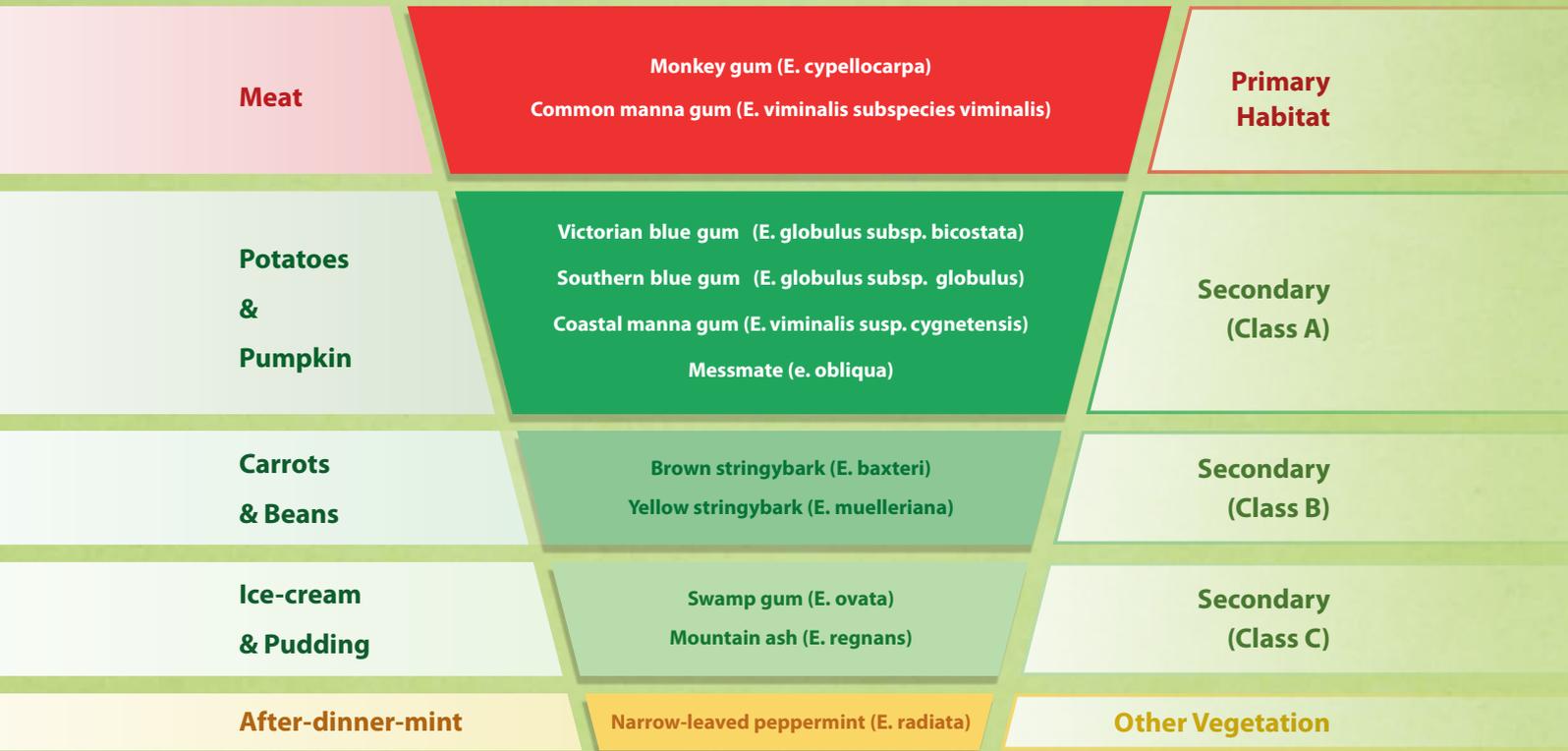




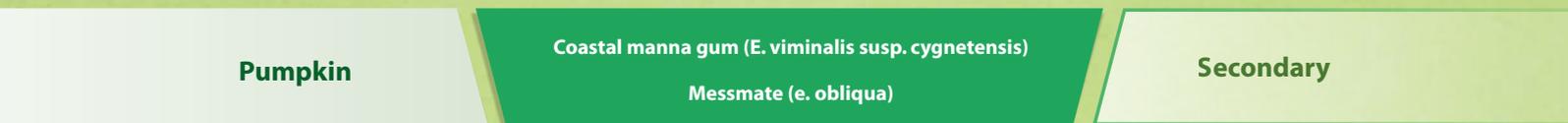
# The Victorian Koala Food Pyramid

An example of the variety of tree species that Koalas need for a healthy diet

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



*Koalas translocated to Cape Otway in 1981 have only had:*



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



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

In Cape Otway, the Koalas only have one choice: pumpkin (coastal manna gum). That is their sole food source. The other components of a healthy diet are completely missing. They have been eating pumpkin for nearly 34 years. No wonder it is disastrous for both the Koala and the trees.

Tree plantings in the area since 2012 have focused on planting more pumpkins (coastal manna gum), with some carrots (messmate). I would be embarrassed if I was the one responsible for choosing the wrong species of tree to plant at Cape Otway.

Sadly, Koalas should never have been put into this landscape, because the preferred trees (meat) for Victorian Koalas do not grow well on these soils. Indeed, Koalas did not ever live in Cape Otway prior to the 1981 translocation (Koalas were moved

to the Cape in 1981 to provide a tourist attraction). There were none there. The release site was a disastrous choice.

Couple that with other problems on the Cape – the bracken fern, the lack of connectivity, the presence of plant pathogens etc. – and it is no wonder the trees are dying and the Koalas are wasting.

The Victorian Government does not have the slightest interest in attempting to disentangle what is driving tree deaths in the area; the only response is the reactive culling of Koalas.

Until the Victorian Government is prepared to look at the problem holistically, rather than the usual band-aid solutions (culls, fertility control, translocations – as far as we know without ethics approvals, without veterinary guidelines) Koalas and the trees on Cape Otway will continue to suffer.



# THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS GREEN OR RED TAPE; WHAT WE NEED IS TRANSPARENT TAPE

**Industry claims it suffers as a result of 'green tape'. But most of the delays in the process are a result of bad projects and bad science.**

Australia should not make it easy to destroy the environment, and destroy our Koala habitat. Why not get the science right, and ensure the environment is not harmed? What we need is transparent tape.

Industry would argue that duplication at different levels of Government is

responsible for delays.

The Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) would argue that the main source of delay is industry's failure to provide good science in the first place, leading to Government requests (often as a result of community pressure) for more information prior to making a decision.

The community, opposed to bad science or a bad project, do not have the resources to provide the necessary detail for a fair assessment of the issues. Community should not have to become experts in traffic, hydrology etc...

The AKF is constantly inundated with community requests for help. Why are they coming to us? They feel that the system is failing to listen to them. And they are correct.

Assessment times would be greatly improved if developers put together a better proposal at the outset, with careful, independent consideration of the environmental constraints they are likely to face. If a proposal is acceptable to Government at the outset, there should be no need for protracted negotiations.

The solution is not giving approval on the condition that a Koala Management Plan

is produced. Why should a project get approval before anyone knows what the impacts will be? The Koala Management Plan should have been prepared before the application was made.

The AKF's Koala Beach estate is a great example - a residential development designed to maximise the retention of the environmental values of the site. During its design phase, great care and attention was given to ensuring the development's impacts were managed. There were 26 species management plans done properly – and there were no hold-ups.

If Government wants to speed up its processes, it should simply be more willing to refuse applications that fail to protect the environment.

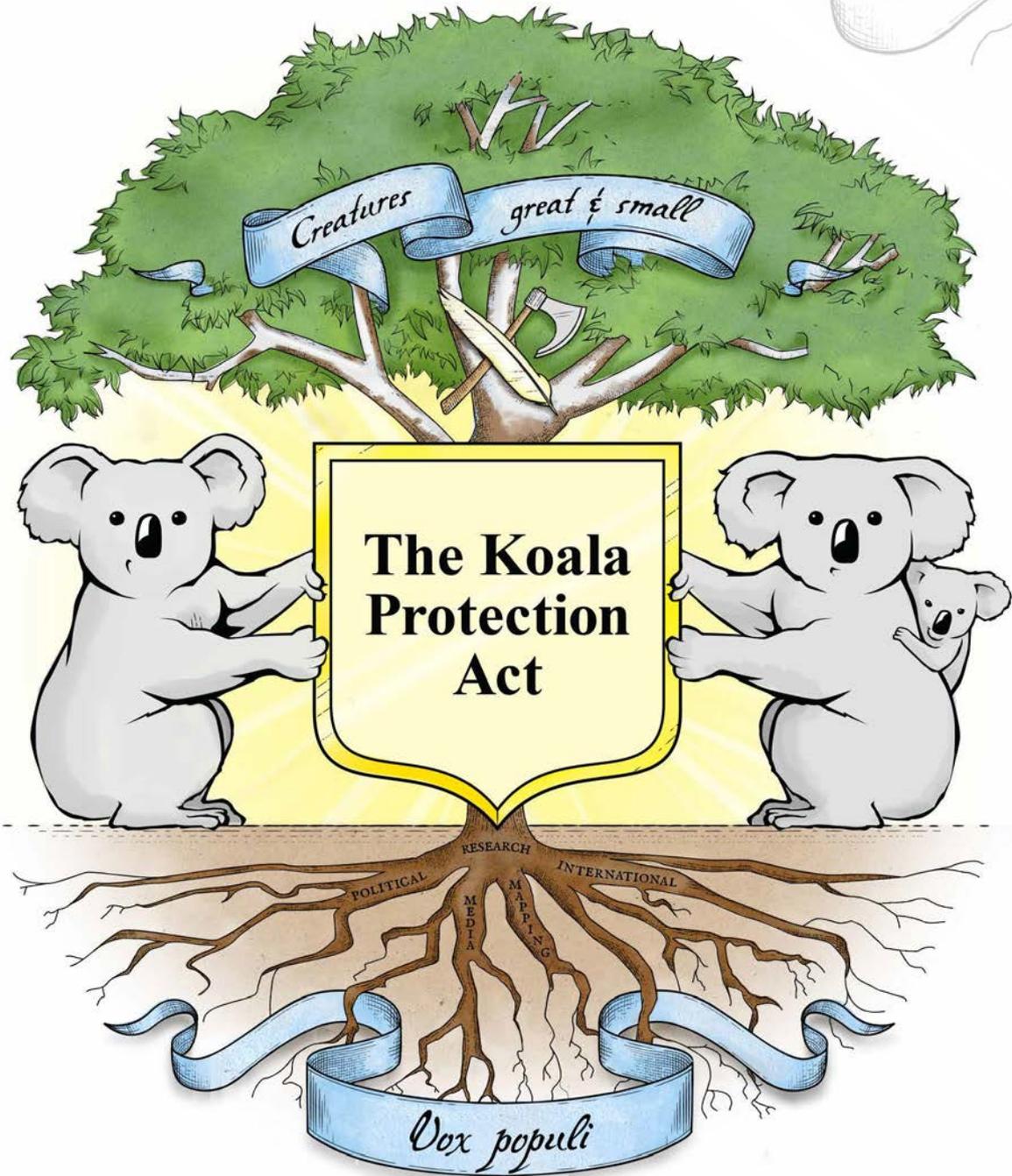
Saying 'no' to bad development is not green tape; it's the appropriate response to bad development.

## The Koala Protection Act

Good development proposals have nothing to fear from the **Koala Protection Act** (KPA). Good science should be at the forefront of the process, supporting good decision making.

IT'S  
TIME FOR  
**THE KOALA  
PROTECTION  
ACT**





ONLY **1** electorate Mayo



HAS MORE THAN  
**5000 KOALAS**

**9** electorates



HAVE BETWEEN  
**1000-5000  
KOALAS**

**47** electorates

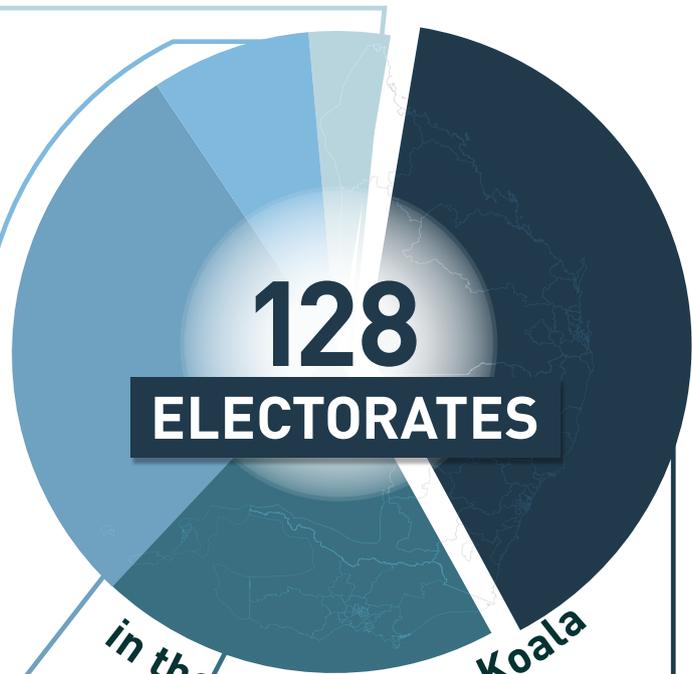


HAVE BETWEEN  
**100-1000  
KOALAS**

**24** electorates



HAVE LESS THAN  
**↓100↓  
KOALAS**



**47** electorates

**KOALAS  
ARE NOW**





# Support the Koala Protection Act.

*It is time for action. The situation for Koalas in Australia is precarious. The Koala needs and deserves the Koala Protection Act.*

It is shocking to think that, out of 128 electorates in the Koalas' current and former range, only 1 electorate still has robust Koala populations: Mayo. In 47 electorates, there are less than 1,000 Koalas left, in 24 electorates there are less than 100 Koalas left, and in 47 electorates **Koalas are now extinct**. It is a disgraceful indictment of environmental protection in this country.

That the Koala, an icon of our country, a key driver of our tourism industry, could be reduced to such a state is outrageous.

The 2012 listing under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act achieved nothing; it has not protected the Koala trees of Australia.

The National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009-2014 was a waste of time; 2014 has already passed us by.

The Recovery Plan, which was supposed to be ready for 2014, has only just surfaced recently in 2022.

*The State governments of Australia are incapable of protecting the Koala.*

Those are not our words; those are the findings of the 2011 Senate Inquiry in the status, health and sustainability of Australia's Koala population.

Australians must not be deluded. The current system is broken. Nothing works.

**The Koala Protection Act could change everything.**

A simple piece of legislation, modelled on the Bald Eagle Act. If we want to protect the Koala, we must protect the trees, and we must start to treat the Koala with the reverence it deserves.

The Bald Eagle took 70 years to recover. It may take the Koala 200 years. We need to start now.

# IMAGINE

## AN AUSTRALIA WITH THE KOALA PROTECTION ACT





## Imagine

All the trees that would be preserved, some of which are hundreds of years old, that have resisted fire and drought, and are capable of storing tonnes and tonnes of carbon.

## Imagine

All the creatures that would also be saved as consequence of protecting Koala forests.

## Imagine

How our housing and lifestyle would improve if development shifted from simply clearing natural landscapes, to building our homes in harmony with the bush.

## Imagine

The future environmental laws that could be passed using the KPA as a precedent.

**The Koala Protection Act could change everything.**



**Do you support the Koala Protection Act?**

# WAYS TO HELP

## Write to Politicians

Let our leaders know what you as their constituent want. Only with the voice of the people can we demand that the Koala Protection Act is enacted and stronger environmental laws are put in place.



For more information:  
[www.savethekoala.com](http://www.savethekoala.com)

## If you live in Koala Area:

- Support community Koala groups in your area.
- Plant Koala food trees. Find out which are the best kinds of gum trees for Koalas in your area.
- Tie up your dogs and keep your cats inside at night, to protect all wildlife.

For more tips visit:  
[www.savethekoala.com](http://www.savethekoala.com)



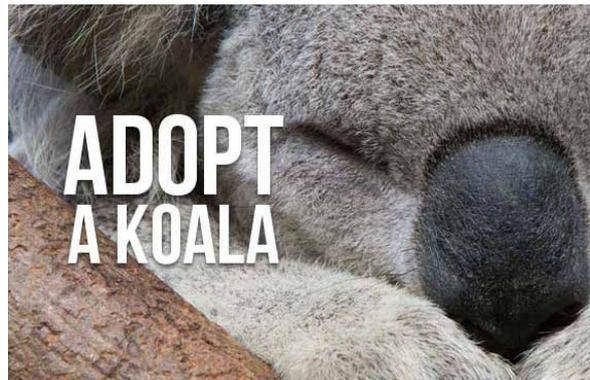
Join the  
**KOALA  
ARMY**  
*today*



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

# How to support the work of The Australian Koala Foundation

AKF is a non-government organisation that is reliant solely on the generous help of our supporters. Here are some ways you can help. For details visit: [www.savethekoala.com](http://www.savethekoala.com)





Australian Koala Foundation

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