

Submission to the Senate Committee Inquiry into the status, health & sustainability of Australia's koala population.

My submission relates to the fact that the koala is not listed as a threatened species Nationally which directly relates to their sustainability especially the koalas found in the Strzelecki Ranges in Victoria..

The Strzelecki koala is unique as it is genetically pure unlike most other koalas found in the Eastern States which have been removed from their original habitat & released elsewhere. These koalas have then interbred causing disease and poor genetic stock..

Living in North Foster in the foothills of the Strzelecki Ranges, I am most concerned for our local koalas as it's habitat is fast diminishing. It is pitiful to see a koala wandering along the roadside looking for suitable feed.

50% of their habitat is on HVP Plantation's property. The koalas feed on the Blue Gums in the plantations but they are to be logged and replaced with Pine and Shining Gums which are not known to be used by koalas.

(Run off from Shining Gum plantations are suspected of causing cancer and illness in people, fish and the Tasmanian Devil on the North East coast of Tasmania. This has not been fully proven yet but is a worry for residents next to these plantations.)

A huge number of koalas were killed in the Strzelecki Ranges during the Black Saturday fires. When driving through the Calignee area you can see just how much of their habitat has been wiped out. The iconic "Sam the koala" was rescued from this area.

Because of logging and farming in the unburnt area there is no satisfactory corridors for the remaining koalas to move to different territories if they are displaced.

HVP have strategies to develop habitat & corridors on their property but they are a business and their strategies will only be followed if there is a profit in it. The safety of the koalas relies entirely on the contractor not felling the trees at the time. He is not going to stop and check every tree before it is felled. Spotting koalas is very difficult and contractors just don't have the time.

I would ask the committee to recommend, at least this little group of koalas, as being a threatened species as they surely are. I would also request the committee recommend more funding available for local landholders to be able to develop corridors on private property as Landcare does not always provide this. Government support should also be maintained for wildlife shelters who receive no funding and are staffed by volunteers. These shelters are the only form of health care the koalas receive if they have been displaced or injured by logging or farming.

When tourists arrive in Australia, the first thing they want to see is a koala. It is far more inspiring to see them in the bush rather than a zoo.

Vivienne Jones