

The Inquiry into the status
Health and sustainability of
Australia's koala



I am a dis ability pensioner living
at Muldu 22 kms by road from Oakey
Queensland. This is the first time
that I have resided in close
proximity to koala colonies. The
curious creatures needless to say
captured my attention.

Purpose of this Submission

The purpose of this submission is to provide further information, evidence and observations in relation to the following terms of reference.

- The iconic status of the koala and the history of its management
- Estimates of koala populations and the adequacy of current counting methods
- Knowledge of koala habitat.
- Threats to koala habitat such as logging, land clearing, poor management, attacks from feral and domestic animals disease and roads and urban development.
- The listing of the koala under the EPBC Act.
- Other related matters.

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The iconic status of the koala and
the history of its management.

As an Icon, the Acland State School used an ink drawing of a koala on their newsletter recognising their local colony. Any Japanese tourist will identify a picture of a koala and immediately associate it with Australia more than any of our other Fauna.

As to management there is not much in the way of highlights. Brought to near extinction in the slaughter up to 1930 and thence a recognisable but seldom regarded status. Basically known a cute, cuddly, lives in trees & eats gum leaves. Not a great effort has been put into studying its biology, diseases or habitat. Baring a few interested souls until about 20 years ago it has been

a matter of little interest. The groundswell of interest is slow in maturing but is hopefully not too late. I do not see a new approach to management being successful divorced from educating the public & raising their concern about koalas. The task is beyond several hundred as I am sure that at least that number is already involved.

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Estimates of koala populations
and the adequacy of current
counting methods.

In the 1920's the export of saleable koala hides was in the millions per year. That does not include unsaleable ones. As there are seriously less gum trees today than then, the then population today would have us campaigning to "save the eulyppts". It can be taken as said that koala numbers are seriously down.

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Knowledge of koala habitat

The only koala habitat that I have any current familiarity with is a strip from Oakey Queensland in a generally northerly direction for 20 kms. If the current application of New Hope Coal's Stage 3 of New Acland Coal mine is approved under the auspices of the EPBC there is the distinct probability that this area will cease to be koala habitat.

When you head North from Oakey along the Oakey Cooyar Road, on your right is the ADI Oakey Aviation Base & its close to 3 metre security fence. The enclosed maps cover this area. Then there is Doctor's Creek floodplain coming from the NE (right of road). This area is almost devoid of trees. At approx 4 kms to your left a colony of hoalas died out from Ovarian Cyst Disease. It has failed to recolonise. At 8 kms Sabine Road Treenway to the left. In a direct line 2 kms west was a hoala colony that decamped when NAC started blasting operations. 9 kms from Oakey is the Greenwood-Boal water hole road with a

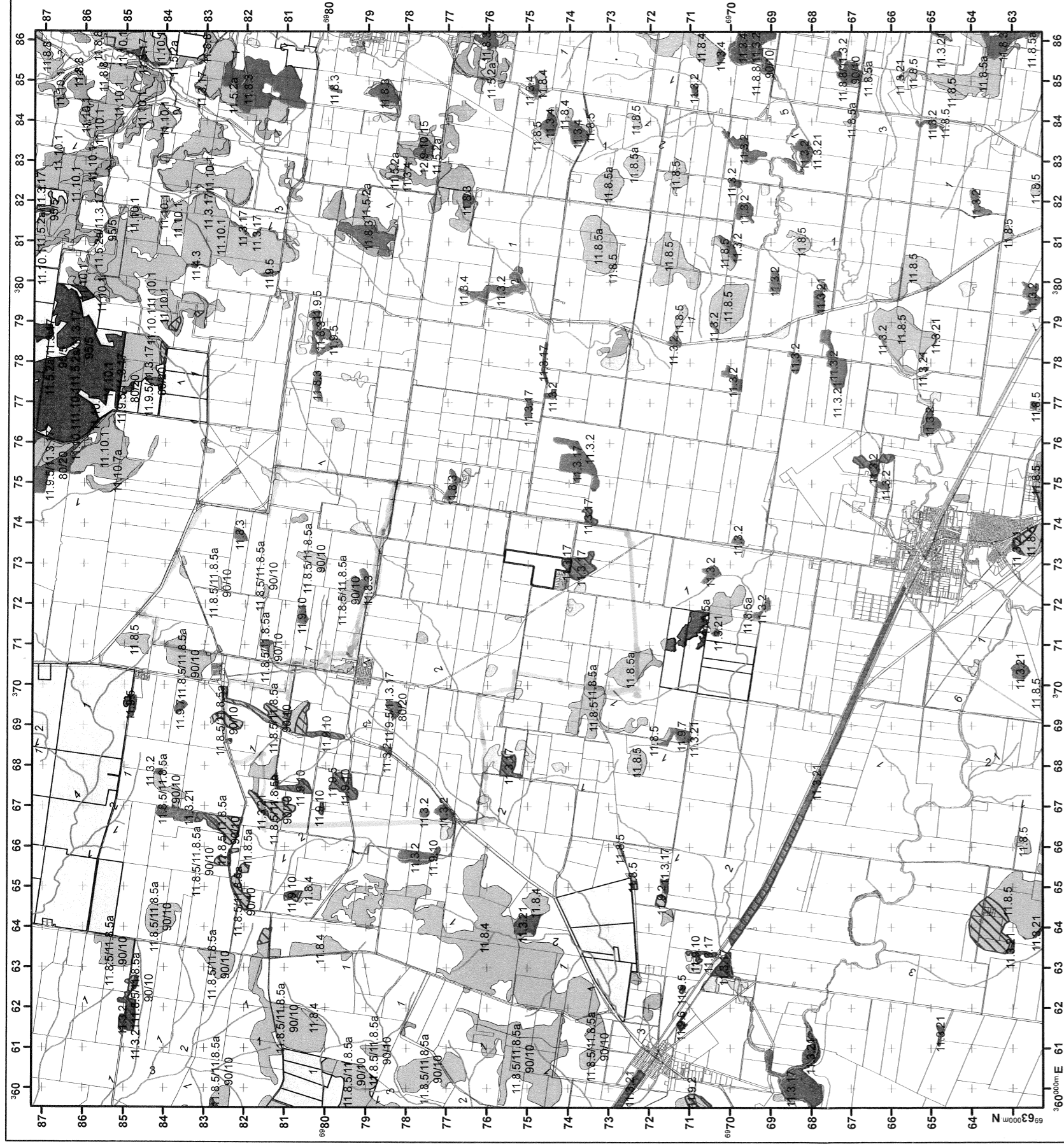
tree way to within a kilometre of the highway. Koalas use this for E-W access. Where the trees peter out there is light scrub cover to the top of Greenwood hill to the north. at $9\frac{1}{2}$ kms Greenwood old school road goes to the west. On the same line 4 kms away another koala colony decamped as a result of blasting by NAC. 13 kms from Oakley access to Adland 5 kms west and at the moment still has koalas in spite of its proximity to the blast site. As they are not tagged it is difficult to say whether resident or transient. There is another colony SW of Adland & W of the Muldu-Jondaryan within the proposed Stage 3 boundary. Coal trucks going to the loading facility at Jondaryan have

accounted for a few casualties. 4 kms north of Acland is Muldu. and since 2001 when NAC started operations no transient koalas have passed through. At the corner of the Muldu - Plainview was a reserve which subsequently was sold to the neighbouring property. The trees were bulldozed & a 25 strong colony was ~~disposed~~ dispossessed. 6 kms W of Muldu along the Muldu Brymaroo Road is a small colony. There are two small colonies to the NW of Muldu. On the northern boundary of NAC Stage 1 vandals shot out a small colony about 20 years ago & it has not reestablished.

When the approval for the go ahead for Stage 3 expansion of NAC is

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given, it will soon become a no
go zone to 20 kms north of Oakey.

Included are maps, diagrams
and a newspaper article with a
photograph.



Assessable Vegetation Map

- Remnant vegetation (v6.0)**
- Containing endangered regional ecosystems
 - Containing of concern regional ecosystems
 - Remnant vegetation that is a least concern regional ecosystem
- Remnant vegetation under Section 20AH
These areas are edged in yellow and filled with the Remnant RE Status
- Non-remnant
 - Plantation Forest
 - Dam or Reservoir
 - Remnant Vegetation
- VMA Essential Regrowth Habitat v3.0**
- VMA Essential Regrowth Habitat v3.0
 - VMA Essential Habitat v3.0
 - Subject Lot(s)
 - Cadastral line
- The maximum spatial error of parcels extracted for this map from the Digital Cadastral Data Base (DCDB) range from: 14m to 251m at 95% confidence level.
Property boundaries shown are provided as a locational aid only.

- High value regrowth vegetation**
- Containing Endangered regional ecosystems
 - Containing Of Concern regional ecosystems
 - That is a Least Concern regional ecosystem
- Property Map of Assessable Vegetation**
- Vegetation Category Area**
- Category A area
 - Category B area
 - Category C area
 - Category X area
- Regrowth Watercourse v2.0**
- Regrowth Watercourse v2.0
 - Other Watercourse v2.0 (Stream order shown against stream where available)
 - Great Barrier Reef Wetlands

- Local Authority Boundary
- Bioregion Boundary
- National Park Boundary, State Forest
- Roads © MapInfo Australia Pty Ltd 2009

1:100,000

0 0.5 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 km



Queensland
Government

Lot on Plan:

IRP36486

NON-STANDARD MAP

This map is a copy of the VMA Regional Ecosystem and Remnant Map, PMAV Regrowth Vegetation Map as defined by the map extent.

All datasets are updated as they become available to provide the most current information as of the date shown on this map.

The PMAV data shown on this map are a representation of the data used to create certified PMAVs. Variations may occur between PMAV boundaries and cadastral boundaries. PMAV data incorporates cadastral boundary data as at the time of certification of the PMAV. The cadastral boundaries shown on this map may have shifted relative to the PMAV boundaries as more accurate cadastral boundary data have become available.

A remnant map covers areas not covered by a regional ecosystem map.
Defined map areas are labelled with the regional ecosystem (RE) code along with the percentage breakdown if more than one RE occurs within the area. Detailed definitions of regional ecosystems are available from www.derm.qld.gov.au/REDD. Defined map areas smaller than 5ha may not be labelled.

Regional ecosystem inventory has been compiled at a scale of 1:100,000, except in designated areas where a scale of 1:50,000 is used. The map is based on aerial photography and ground truthing. The positional accuracy of RE data mapped at a scale of 1:100,000 is +/-100 metres. The extent of remnant regional ecosystems as of 2006, depicted on this map is based on rectified 2006 Landsat TM imagery (supplied by SLATS, Department of Environment and Resource Management).

Some watercourse lines are derived from GeoScience Australia 1:250,000 mapping.

Disclaimer:

While every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of this product, the Department of Environment and Resource Management and MapInfo Australia Pty Ltd. do not accept any liability for errors or omissions, including consequential damage and costs which you might incur as a result of the product being inaccurate or incomplete in any way and for any reason.

Additional information is required for the purposes of land clearing

or assessment of a regional ecosystem map or

PMAV applications. For further information go to the web site www.derm.qld.gov.au/vegetation or contact the

Department of Environment and Resource Management.

Digital regional ecosystem data is available in shapefile format, for Lot on Plans from

www.derm.qld.gov.au/REDATA or from DERM for larger areas.

RE Date

October 2009

DCDB Date

January 2011

Map Date

24/01/2011

Produced by: The Department of Environment and Resource Management

Horizontal Datum: Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994 (GDA94)

Grey numbered tick marks are 1000 metre intervals on Transverse Mercator Projection

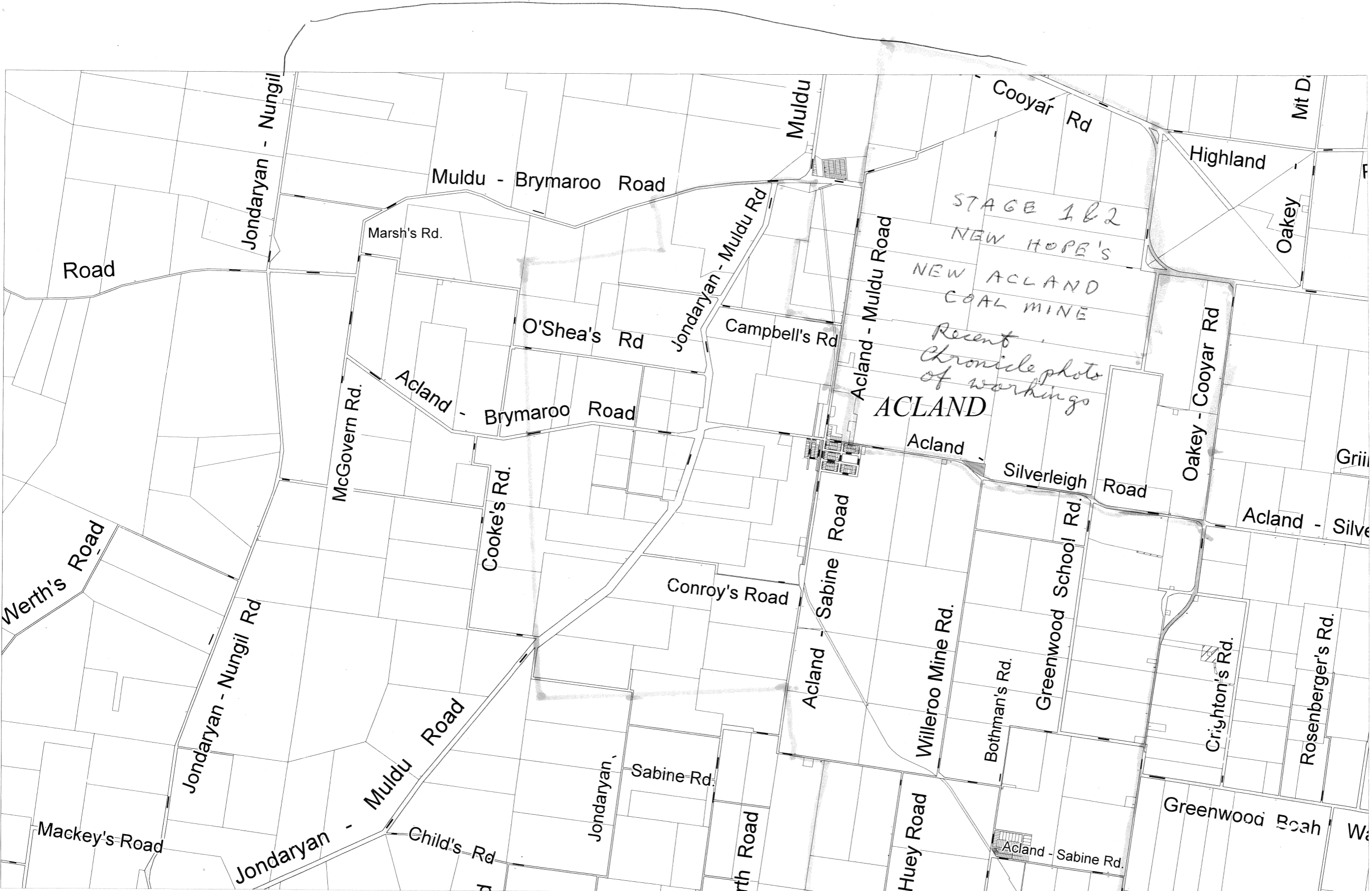
Map Grid of Australia (MGA) Zone 56

Cadastral data provided with the permission of the Department of Environment and Resource Management

Property boundaries shown on this map are provided as a locational aid only.

DCDB boundaries do not represent legal cadastral boundaries

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*proposed Stage 3
not all the area*

Helpers urged to register

By JOHN FARMER
john.farmer@thechronicle.com.au

LOCKYER Valley Regional Council has urged flood clean-up volunteers to register before they converge on the region.

Chief executive officer Ian Flint said it was simply not possible to accommodate all offers of assistance in one day or weekend.

Mr Flint said by registering, volunteers would allow council to better co-ordinate the rebuild.

"It is just wonderful that so many people care enough about our community that they are trying to help," he said.

"We are so very grateful, but, at this stage we need to be in a better position to manage it."

Mr Flint said until further notice, council centres could not take donations of perishable and non-perishable food items, or furniture. He said a bank account had been established where cash donations could be made.

"We must hold off on taking more material donations until it best suits the needs of the people that need it most — at a time they need it most," he said.

"In the future, as more people start rebuilding their lives, homes and neighbourhoods, material donations will be most helpful."

The Lockyer Valley Regional Council's Flood Recovery Bank Account details are: BSB: 084 657 /account number: 188 881 996



PICTURE: JACINTA CUMMINS/DALBY HERALD

A bird's eye view of New Hope's Acland coal mine which has been closed due to flood inundation.

Coal operations on hold

By JOHN FARMER
john.farmer@thechronicle.com.au



OPERATIONS have come to a standstill at coal mines across the flood-hit Western Downs.

All of the region's three major mines — Wilkie Creek, Acland and Cameby Downs — have experienced some level of inundation during the past month. Meanwhile, it could be months

before access to the Port of Brisbane is reopened after it was cut off due to the damage to Queensland's rail network.

Peabody Energy, which operates the Wilkie Creek coal mine near Dalby, only regained access to the mine site on Wednesday.

Currently, operations remain on hold as the company attempts to secure the site.

"At this stage, safety is our top priority and a full risk assessment will be conducted at the mine before workers return to the site

and begin to focus on recovery activities," a company spokesman said.

Peabody's spokesman said it was too early to comment on the state of Queensland's rail network.

"We will be guided by Queensland Rail as to any future impacts on our operations."

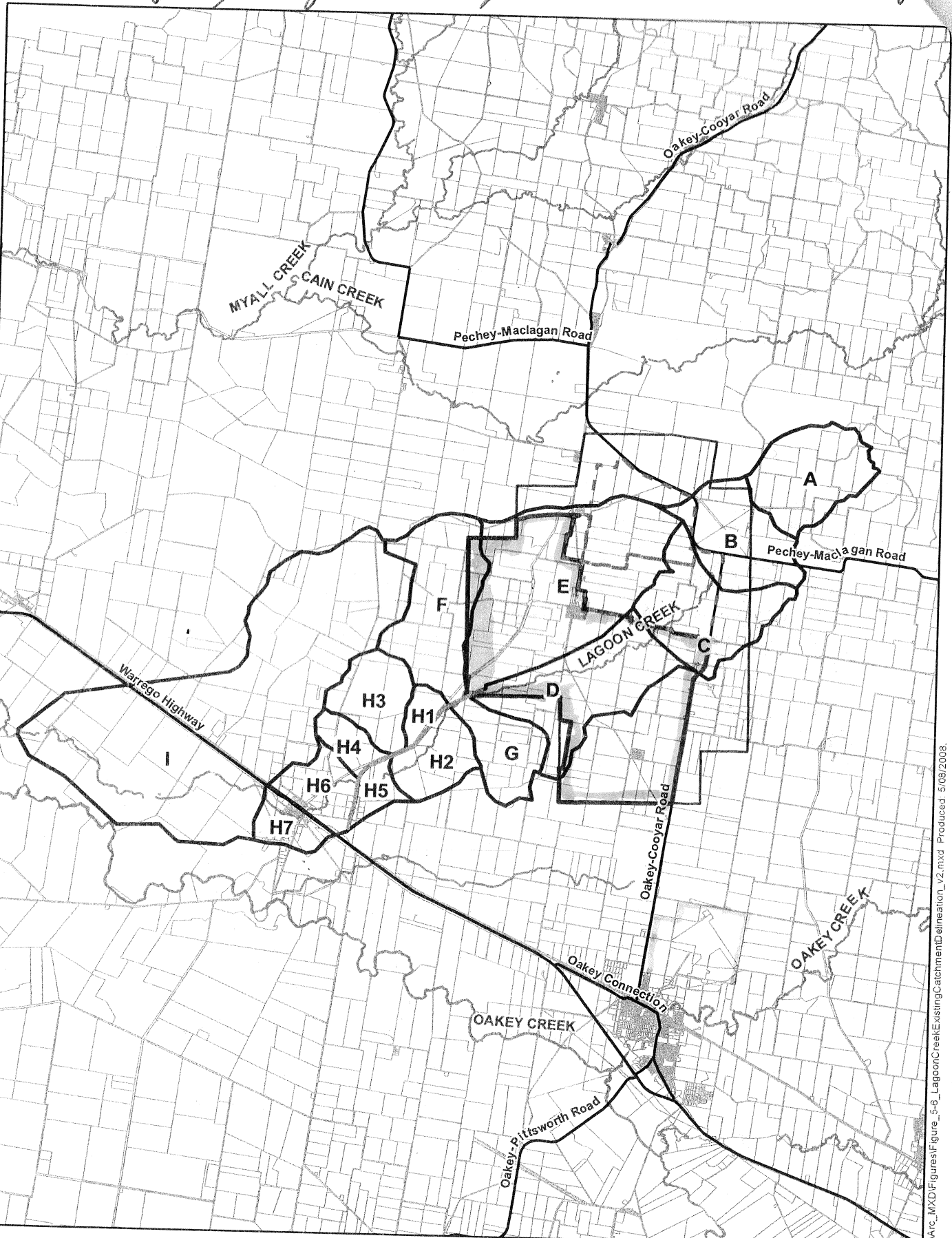
During the worst of the floods, Wilkie Creek employees assisted State Emergency Service personnel with relief efforts in Dalby, Toowoomba and across the Darling Downs.

Meanwhile, Queensland Premier Anna Bligh said water would not be discharged from coal pits at the expense of the environment.

About 85 per cent of Queensland's 59 coal mines shut down production or operated under restrictions during the floods.

"Every single mine is required to have an environmental authority to release water and we are working with every single mine to work out how we get that water out of the pits," Ms Bligh said.

— with AAP



- LEGEND**
- Drainage
 - ▭ Cadastre
 - ▭ Proposed Private Haul Road
 - ▭ Existing Mining Lease
 - ▭ Stage 3 Mining Lease Application
 - ▭ Stage 3 MDL
 - ▭ Lagoon Creek Sub Catchments

*proposed stage 3
New Hope Coal
stage 1 & 2 New Acland coal mine
Oakley aviation Base*



FIGURE 5-6
NEW ACLAND STAGE 3 COAL MINE EXPANSION
Lagoon Creek Existing Catchments

0 1 2 3 4 5
Kilometres
Scale 1:175,000 on A4
Projection: AMG - Zone 56 (AGD84)

Threats to koala habitat such as
logging, land clearing, poor
management, attacks from feral
and domestic animals, disease
and roads and urban development.

There is no logging

In the last 13 years only two paddocks in the surrounding area have been cleared. One surrounded on four sides by forested country. The other not large & only possible small overall impact. Another small area of Belah close to a house & piggery & isolated from any other timber.

Poor management usually of long standing. Even the old farmers look aghast at you if you talk about cutting down trees.

There is some poor cultivation techniques, but probably do not overly effect koalas.

There are foxes, feral cats & the odd dingo or dingo between bait runs. No available data relevant to fauna. I have lived in sheep country and I make it known that only dingoes are loose at night and they get shot. No ifs or maybe.

Since the koala colony closest to Oahey was devastated by O.C.D. no one seems to be aware of disease casualties.

about four have been killed on the Muldu - Gondaryan Road. This is the Coal Haul Road & triple & quad trailer trucks cannot take evasive action or they get wrecked. One koala spat out from under a coal truck it miraculously

only stunned.

One was killed on the Oakey-Looyar Road about 4 years back near the Sabine turn off. The staff at the mine numerous road kill just about every other possible type of wildlife excepting koalas.

Urban development is not an issue in this area.

The listing of the koala under
the EPBC act.

Tomorrow is not too soon for
Southern Queensland.

Early 2010 - three month ground
survey near Charlevill
6 sightings

2010 Central Southern
district state listing
(of concern)

Late 2010 SE corner East of the
range, dropped from
15,000 to 2,500.

all this before an unprecedented
flood event.

Attached is a copy of part of New Hope Coal's submission for New Acland Coal Mine Stage 3 Expansion Project - Environmental Impact Statement pages 4-8 & 4-9 of Section H 5 appendisc.

Although it is not about koalas it deals with another migratory species listed N V under the EPBC. A bat can fly to its feeding & camping sites and does so at night & you can hear them twittering in flight. As it breeds in in NSW the attitude is that if it does not camp in an area its feeding grounds can be cut off with impunity. It appears that the opinion of Dr Harry Frith of the CSIRO commenting on the conservation of migratory species in Waterfowl in Australia has not been

taken to heart. His comment is about all migratory species not just waterfowl.

How does this relate to a koala. a koala cannot fly and is most vulnerable on the ground. Has low energy output due to singular food type. This makes for a rather sedentary life style. Is reliant on tree corridors & eucalypts for mobility, rest places, safety & food supply. Break the chain of requirements & they will be detrimentally affected. As it takes on average 20 years to reestablish eucalypts in this area & it is proposed for this mining operation to go into the 2030's before ceasing operations, so no established food source until approximately 2050.

This is a very narrow focus & disregards impacts on any other species. The Queensland Floods recently have focused our attention. A large urban area cut off by road, sea & airport unusable, did we say don't be a wimp if koalas can have their food & travel put on hold for years show some fortitude. No! the ADI was mobilized to chopper in essentials as soon as possible. No food & no possibility of getting to it and you will die.

Will listing koalas on the EPBC provide any worthwhile protection overall or will history put it down as a nice try but it didn't work.

While the Resources Industries are exempted from vegetation laws. They have the choice of choosing between state & Federal licencing of operations to dodge more restrictive conditions. The sometimes obtainable loopholes because conditions imposed are very limited in scope or emphatically stated. Listing a species is one thing making it work on the ground can be extremely difficult. There is no system of relating culminative effects & if seperate projects though not appearing overly detrimental in isolation will in relation to other considerations contribute to disaster over a larger area.

Criteria	Assessment of Significance
<i>Reduce the area of occupancy of an important population</i>	Plant material will be collected from all metapopulations to be impacted, and will be translocated to a receiving site within the same locality. As such, translocated plants will be located within the same area of occupancy as the existing plants. More significantly, they will be located within a designated conservation area, rather than roadside vegetation which is subject to extensive disturbance.
<i>Fragment an existing important population into two or more populations</i>	Populations of these species are already highly fragmented. To that extent, the Project will not fragment any populations which are not already widely separated.
<i>Adversely affect habitat critical to the survival of a species</i>	The Project will impact on a number of highly fragmented populations of these species. The patches are located in an agricultural landscape and are subject to grazing pressure, mechanical disturbance and weed invasion. As a result, these patches are not considered critical to the survival of the species.
<i>Disrupt the breeding cycle of an important population</i>	These plants maintain self-sustaining populations in roadside vegetation. It is expected that they will also reproduce within the proposed translocation areas and as such, the breeding cycle will not be significantly disrupted.
<i>Modify, destroy, remove or isolate or decrease the availability or quality of habitat to the extent that the species is likely to decline</i>	The Project will disturb the habitat of these species. However, implementation of the PSRMP will result in the establishment of ex-situ populations of all species in a secure location. It is therefore considered that the species are unlikely to decline as a result of the Project.
<i>Result in invasive species that are harmful to a vulnerable species becoming established in the vulnerable species habitat</i>	These species persist alongside several invasive species (e.g. Soft Roly Poly (<i>Salsola kali</i>), <i>Opuntia tomentosa</i> , etc.). There is potential for the spread of weed species as a result of construction and operation activities. However, as part of the mine operation there will be a weed management plan in place. As a result, weeds should be kept under control as part of the Project's management regime.
<i>Interferes substantially with the recovery of the species</i>	No formal recovery plan has been adopted for this species under the provisions of the EPBC Act.

4.2.5. Grey-headed Flying Fox

The Project will result in the temporary reduction in foraging habitat at a local level, potentially adversely impacting on the foraging behaviour of members of the local flying-fox population. The assessment of the significance on the Grey-headed Flying-fox is presented in **Table 4-5**.

Table 4-6 EPBC Act assessment of significance on Grey-headed Flying Fox

Criteria	Assessment of Significance
<i>The action is likely to have a significant impact on a vulnerable species if it is likely to:</i>	Grey-headed Flying-fox
<i>Lead to a long-term decrease in the size of an important population of a species</i>	The Grey-headed Flying-fox has been recorded as single individuals foraging in the Project site. There are no camps located within the Project site. The records of the species from the Project site and a general low level of activity indicate that the population is transitory in nature, and does not fall within the definition of "important population" as defined by the EPBC Act.
<i>Reduce the area of occupancy of an important population</i>	The population is not considered to be an important population.
<i>Fragment an existing important population into two or more populations</i>	The population is not considered to be an important population.



H5

Criteria	Assessment of Significance
<i>Adversely affect habitat critical to the survival of a species</i>	The habitat within the Project site is not critical to the survival of the species.
<i>Disrupt the breeding cycle of an important population</i>	The population is not considered to be an important population.
<i>Modify, destroy, remove or isolate or decrease the availability or quality of habitat to the extent that the species is likely to decline</i>	The occasional use of habitat within the Project site is consistent with the foraging ecology of this species throughout its range. It will occur seasonally in the wider locality, but may not utilise available habitats on a regular basis. Longer term, reestablishment of Lagoon Creek's riparian zone may offer additional habitat.
<i>Result in invasive species that are harmful to a vulnerable species becoming established in the vulnerable species habitat</i>	The Project will not introduce any invasive species which is recognised as a threat to this species.
<i>Interferes substantially with the recovery of the species</i>	The Project is considered very unlikely to interfere with the recovery of the species.

4.2.6. Impacts on Migratory Species

One listed migratory species have been recorded on the Project site, the Cattle Egret. An additional species, the White-throated Needletail, is considered to have at least a moderate likelihood of occurring at the Project site based on the suitability of the habitat.

The ToR for the EIS does not contain prescriptions which specifically relate to impacts on migratory species. As a result, this assessment has defaulted to EPBC Act Policy Statement 1.1 - Significant Impact Guidelines (Matters of National Significance). This section lists the significant impact criteria against which the proposal is to be assessed, reviews the occurrence of important habitat and ecologically significance of populations across the Study Area.

A summary assessment of the level of impact of the Project on these migratory species is provided in **Table 4-6**.

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 Pteropus poliocephalus
 Grey-headed Flying Fox
 Nationally Vulnerable
 EPBC

The Tourism Industry is a beneficiary of the presence of koalas

Koalas must be of some International political significance as the members of the Copenhagen Climate Change Committee that visited Australia dropped in on one of the local koala colonies as at times other International Representatives have done in the past.

There needs to be more research to improve our sparse knowledge.

Koalas are not compatible with suburbia very low brain capacity & not adoptable.

Farmers who supply milk generally have a sign on their fence. Landcare participants have a sign. How about - This Property contains a koala habitat or This property has a koala friendly Greenway Corridor. a badge of pride & achievement not of enforced liability.

The ball is in your court.
Best of luck assembling
the information & gleaming
usable suggestions