Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

6 February 2011

RE: **Inquiry into the status, health and sustainability of Australia's koala population**

Dear Sir/Ms

I live in the Coffs Harbour City Council local government area, and despite our being the first LGA in NSW to adopt a comprehensive Koala Plan of Management, we still have not done justice to our responsibilities in regard to the long-term management of Koalas within our region.

Of even greater and ongoing concern, however, has been the granting of logging approvals by the Private Native Forestry (PNF) Division of the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW), resulting in the loss of nearly 2000 ha of the 19,000 ha of core Koala Habitat in the Coffs Harbour LGA.

When questioned about this practice recently, DECCW's Director of Landscapes and Ecosystem Management Tom Grosskopf commented in the local newspaper (Advocate 29 Dec. 2010) that *"the Coffs Harbour (Koala) Plan of Management did not fall under the NSW environmental planning policy but rather the council had its own detailed plan and had written themselves out of the state plan."*

Far from writing itself out of the state plan, between 1996 and 2000, Coffs Harbour City Council (CHCC) undertook the preparation of a comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (KPoM) according to NSW State Government guidelines: *"Procedures for Preparing Comprehensive Koala Plans of Management under State Environmental Planning Policy 1995 (SEPP) No.44-Koala Habitat Protection.*

In May 2000, over ten years ago, this plan was given conditional approval by the then Director General of the NSW Dept. of Planning and was incorporated into the CHCC Local Environment Plan 2000 (LEP 2000). http://www.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/www/html/4429-managing-our-koala-population.asp

The principle aim of our KPoM is to provide a framework for the conservation and management of Koala Habitat and the management of threats to Koalas. That mapping forms the basis for the identification of areas meriting protection through the planning provisions of the CHCC LEP 2000.

The KPoM identifies Koala Habitat – Primary, Secondary and Tertiary – on private land in the LGA, and council is the consent authority. However almost half the land in the LGA is State Forests or National Parks and is not under council's jurisdiction.

One of the conditions of the Koala Plan was the setting up of a community-based Koala Advisory Committee, which I've been on for 10 years now, along with CHCC and DECCW representatives.

Unfortunately, over the ten years since council adopted the KPoM, council has not always been vigilant in adhering to its Koala Plan when granting development consents, so we have had a net loss of Koala habitat.

DECCW's logging approvals contravene Clause 12 of the LEP, which requires the consent authority (council) shall not grant consent to any development on lands mapped as Primary, Secondary or Tertiary Koala Habitat or on lands adjoining Primary Koala Habitat unless the development is in accordance with the KPoM. Clearly, logging Koala habitat is not in accordance with the KPoM, but as council is in no way involved in the PNF decision-making, it is unable to halt the process.

I do not wish to be included in the generation who stood by and did nothing while we systematically destroyed Koala habitat, making it almost impossible for them to live here. I commend the Senate for undertaking this inquiry. The terms of reference are all very relevant and require great scrutiny if we are to see improved outcomes for the proper conservation of Koala habitat and populations in Australia.

As I see it, the first thing the Senate needs is to secure a commitment from State Governments to agree to the conservation of these internationally renowned and loved creatures and demand the NSW State Government immediately cease the practice of issuing PNF logging licences in Koala Habitat and adjoining Endangered Ecological Communities (EECs).

Once you deal with this shameful disregard for the legislation, then you can get on with the important business at hand that is covered by the terms of reference.

I wish you well in your deliberations and look forward to the day when we all commit to the health and sustainability of Australia's Koala populations.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Regards

Rod McKelvey

Board Member, NSW Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority
Former Deputy Mayor, Coffs Harbour City Council
Member, Coffs Harbour City Council Koala Plan of Management Advisory Committee