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

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

Dear Sir/Madam

Species loss from human degradation of the environment is preventable.

Koalas are at the top of the species chain, equivalent to the orangutan of tropical rainforests in maintaining forest health.

Here on the southeast coast of NSW, at the base of the sacred Mumbulla Mountain, 30-50 healthy, breeding koalas have been surveyed during the past 2 years; there may be as few as 200 left in the entire region. Logging is scheduled to log hundreds of hectares in the forests where koalas have been sighted.

Once these woodlands and forests "rained" down with koala pee. This animal is a vital part of the nutrient cycle of our forests and soils.

Clearing for agriculture, hunting for pelts and dog meat wiped out hundreds and hundreds of thousands last century.

Now logging, mainly for taxpayer-subsidized woodchip logs (over 90%) will push koalas to regional extinction. With native forests included in Renewable Energy Targets, this gives an economic incentive as a secondary market for woodchipping to continue despite being economically, environmentally and socially unsustainable, Dark and coloured trees will now become targets for logging, and further degrade potential recovery habitat.

There is no provision for habitat corridors for the expansion of this territorial animal and so importantly, for their survival in an ever changing climate. A whole of landscape approach - conservation corridors - is vital to the survival of koalas and the thousand other threatened and endangered species which cohabit the east coast of the mainland.

Regional Forest Agreements (RFA) are excluded from the Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act and this must be over turned.

Koalas cannot survive without habitat; the world is NOW acutely aware of the environmental impact of humans in tropical rainforests. It is time to put biodiversity above human expansion and protect habitat as priority across all tenures – state, federal, and private.

The Bega Valley Shire has recently been proclaimed as Australian Coastal Wilderness Landscape, in order to attract high value tourism to the world's most accessible temperate forests. Proper legislation could help protect and repopulate this beautiful region with that most desired of animal tourists wish to see, the koala.

Surely this would be "the immoral outcome of our times", if the only place our grand children and tourists can see koalas and the other species found in their habitat zones, is a zoo.

Yours sincerely
Prue Acton O.B.E.