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The Australian Forest Products Association (formerly National Association of Forest Industries) was wrong when they stated the clearing of trees in koala habitat actually benefited koalas. My experience is that koalas don't prefer young trees. They will access them only if other mature varieties are not available.

However, I would argue that the maturity of a tree provides added protection from predators and allows koalas to be able to view additional habitat. At this stage I don't have papers/studies I can point to that would support that argument (which I'm sure the forest products association lacks as well), however, I am investigating further.

In the Queensland State Government's koala offset policy (the one released last year) they require any offsets to be maintained to maturity:
(from the policy p. 4)

5.13.3 monitoring and reporting requirements

1. *ongoing monitoring and reporting is required to ensure the management plan is able to restore and protect the offset area until it becomes mature koala bushland habitat*.

I think that such a statement's inclusion in a State Policy is a pretty strong argument in my favour. I know it does not point to specific research backing such a statement, however, it inherently acknowledges that mature vegetation is preferred by an organisation with the responsibility of its management.

According to all that I have read and observed koalas seem to favour mature trees because they have the full range of desirable leaf from tip to older leaf. I am still in the process of undertaking further research to forward to the Committee for inclusion in the Senate inquiry into the status, health and sustainability of Australia's koala population.

Thanks Vanda Grabowski
Secretary and Education Officer
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