



Ryde - Hunter's Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society

Member of Nature Conservation Council of N.S.W.

**P.O. Box 2127
Boronia Park 2111**

Director, Planning Frameworks
NSW Department of Planning and Environment
GPO Box 39, Sydney NSW 2001
3 March 2017

Re: Draft Koala habitat protection SEPP 44.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Our Society is extremely concerned to see our iconic koala properly protected across its whole range. As is often stated they are more valuable to all Australians alive as a tourist attraction than dead through loss and fragmentation of their habitat areas due to land clearing and urban development. The impacts of a changing climate will also put greater pressure on our koala.

Numbers are plummeting with the species now listed as vulnerable under State and Commonwealth threatened species legislation. Weak controls over major development, inadequate regulation of logging activities and lack of government resourcing and commitment has meant State Environmental Planning Policy No 44 – Koala Habitat Protection (**SEPP 44**) has not been able to effectively protect koalas and their habitat. Whilst this review of SEPP 44 offers an opportunity for government to strengthen controls over koala habitat and protection of the endangered species we have no confidence that government will take that opportunity.

There is no adequate explanation of how ecological assessments of koala habitat will occur and whether they will be undertaken by independent consultants robustly and transparently.

Whilst we support a requirement for comprehensive plans of management we feel that site specific plans will also be necessary at times, as in the past. We note that there are no guidelines on exhibition in how to prepare the plans of management. Councils need adequate resources to prepare such plans which should be regularly monitored.

The poor management and protection of koala habitat by government has been disappointing and irresponsible. The recent review of the decline of the species by the Chief Scientist recommended an evaluation of the effectiveness of the current SEPP 44 within the environmental planning and assessment process. It is unclear why government has not commenced such a review as recommended by the Chief Scientist prior to this limited review of SEPP 44 and development of the Koala Strategy which has also been placed on exhibition.

Yours sincerely
Cathy Merchant, Committee Member