



## Steve Dimopoulos MP

Minister for Environment  
Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events  
Minister for Outdoor Recreation

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Robert McDonald  
Clerk of the Legislative Council

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Dear Mr McDonald

Thank you for your letters of 26 August 2025 about Georgie Purcell, Member for the Northern Victoria Region's request for an inquiry into the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action's koala management.

The response to the Budj Bim wildlife welfare event was in response to a bushfire, ignited on 10 March 2025, which burned approximately 2,200ha of Budj Bim National Park, including a large area of manna gum canopy which is one of the preferred food trees for koalas.

Throughout the event, the wildlife welfare emergency response was delivered by trained DEECA and Parks Victoria staff, along with accredited local wildlife rehabilitators and veterinarians from the Wildlife Emergency Support Network, searching for, assessing and treating impacted wildlife. Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners formed part of the Incident Management Team, supporting this work.

During the response, 2,219 koalas were assessed by both ground and aerial teams, with 48 percent identified as fire-impacted and requiring euthanasia to relieve pain and suffering.

With only 13 per cent of the area accessible by on-ground wildlife assessors, the response required both ground-based and aerial assessment and treatment of fire impacted wildlife. This decision to employ an aerial assessment and response was not an easy decision. It was informed by experienced vets and one of Australia's leading wildlife welfare ethics experts and through the conduct of a pre-operation trial to test its effectiveness and humaneness.

All other methods considered were not appropriate given the large numbers of impacted koalas in urgent need of welfare assessment and treatment, the remote location of animals often high in the canopy, the inability to safely access large areas of the impacted landscape by foot due the extremely rugged terrain, and in consideration of the safety risks of working in a fire affected area, with fire impacted trees.

Owners and managers of blue gum plantations who wish to undertake operations that may affect koalas must apply for, and comply with, an authorisation to disturb koalas under the *Wildlife Act 1975*. Authorisation conditions for plantation companies include standards for koala detection prior to and during harvest and habitat tree retention in plantations when koalas are detected. The Conservation Regulator monitors harvesting activities as part of its regulatory priorities.

The Government is committed to managing the welfare of koalas and ensuring sustainable, healthy populations are maintained.

The Victorian Government is committed to the protection of Victoria's koalas and has developed the Victorian Koala Management Strategy (VKMS) to ensure that Victoria's koala populations and habitat are secure, healthy and sustainable in the long-term.

In some areas of Victoria, koalas occur at unsustainable densities. This can lead to a loss of habitat through over-browsing and can result in significant koala welfare impacts due to lack of food trees.

Through the BushBank program, the Victorian Government has provided up to \$1 million to help create additional habitat on private land near the park to help improve food and habitat availability for koalas in the future.

The 2025-26 State Budget includes a further commitment of \$600,000 over two years for 'Caring for Koalas' as part of the 'Enabling collaborative wildlife management' initiative. This funding will provide continued support for Victoria's koalas by continuing the implementation of the Victorian Koala Management Strategy (VKMS), particularly delivery of on-ground koala management programs to protect habitat and koala welfare.

In consideration of these factors and ongoing efforts to support wildlife welfare, effective emergency response and protection of koalas in Victoria through significant investment and implementation of the VKMS, the need for a separate inquiry or targeted investigation is not supported, or a halt to harvesting warranted.

Thank you once again for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely



**Steve Dimopoulos MP**  
**Member for Oakleigh**  
**Minister for Environment**

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