

NSW SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Mr R Bertram

PO Box 161
BERMAGUI NSW 2546

Dear Mr Bertram,

Thank you for your submission in regard to the Preliminary Determination by the NSW Scientific Committee not to support a proposal to list a population of the Koala *Phascolarctos cinereus* occupying coastal sub-catchments between Dignam's Creek and Wapengo Lagoon near Bega in south-eastern New South Wales as an endangered population in Part 2 of Schedule 1 of the Threatened Species Conservation (TSC) Act (1995). The criteria for listing determinations of an Endangered Population are prescribed by the TSC Regulation 2002. The Committee found that this population did not satisfy any of the paragraphs in Clause 19 of Division 2 of the TSC Regulation (2002), specifically that the population (a) is not disjunct or near the limit of its geographic range, (b) is not likely to be genetically, morphologically or ecologically distinct, or (c) is not otherwise of significant conservation value.

As previously advised in the Committee's letter of 4th December 2006 the Scientific Committee, in consultation with koala experts from NSW, Victoria and Queensland, subsequently developed a set of guidelines for defining 'disjunct populations' and populations of 'significant conservation value' in the context of the TSC Act. In regard to the nomination of Koalas occupying the coastal sub-catchments between Dignam's Creek and Wapengo Lagoon near Bega, these guidelines indicate that this population is sufficiently connected by habitat to the broader Koala population of south-east NSW so as not to be a disjunct population. Moreover, there is no evidence that the nominated population is likely to be genetically, morphologically or ecologically distinct. Nor does the population satisfy the guidelines in regard to a population of significant conservation value.

The Committee's rejection of this nominated koala population does not imply that the longterm viability of this Vulnerable Species is not at high risk of extinction in the medium-term future. Koalas in the area of the nominated population are threatened by ongoing degradation in the quality of their habitat because of extensive canopy dieback, clearing due to rural residential development and commercial forest harvesting. Further measures are needed to mitigate these threatening processes and provide for the recovery of this iconic species in south-east NSW and elsewhere in its range.

Yours sincerely

Professor Lesley
Hughes
Chairperson
Scientific Committee

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ESTABLISHED BY THE THREATENED SPECIES CONSERVATION ACT 1995

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