

Submission regarding Bowdens Silver Project

I am pleased to be able to have this opportunity to raise my concerns in regard to the proposed Bowdens Silver Project at Lue, NSW. I am a professional horticulturalist originally from the Upper Hunter Valley. As a child, I spent many holidays exploring the bushland around Lue, observing the local flora and fauna; this instilled in me a deep passion for Australia's unique wilderness. For this reason, I oppose the Bowdens Silver Project.

If it goes ahead, Bowdens Silver Project will destroy over 380 hectares of vegetation, 180 hectares of which consists of critically endangered Box-Gum grassy woodlands. Once widespread, these remaining woodlands support more than 400 plant species and are invaluable primary habitat for critically endangered species such as the Regent Honeyeater, as well as iconic species such as the Koala.

According to a report commissioned by the International Fund for Animal Welfare, approximately 5000 koalas in New South Wales are likely to have perished in the recent bushfires, and Koala populations may have dropped by as much as two-thirds in less than 20 years due to habitat destruction, climate change, and drought. In response to this report's findings, Koala ecologist Dr Stephen Philips is calling on Koalas to receive an endangered listing.¹ The Box-Gum grassy woodland habitat on the site proposed for Bowdens Silver Project includes species such as *eucalyptus blakelyi*, Blakleys Red Gum, which is one of the few species of eucalypt that is a food source for the Koala.

In the wake of the devastating 2019/2020 bushfires, the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital initiated a GoFundMe campaign seeking to raise \$25 000 to set up drinking stations to provide Koalas with water in fire-affected areas.² The fundraiser gained international attention and raised over one million dollars, with donations coming from more than 20 000 people across the globe, including the United States, France, and England.³

In lieu of this, any further destruction of koala habitat is not only pushing koalas closer to extinction, but will be a slap in the face of concerned citizens across the globe who have generously donated their time and money to help us save this iconic species.

Australians, as custodians of our unique flora and fauna, have a responsibility to the rest of the world that cannot be underestimated. It is up to us to protect, conserve, and regenerate our beautiful country so that our children will grow up enjoying the same privileges that we have had ourselves. Therefore, I strongly believe that the proposal for the Bowdens Silver Project should be rejected.

I also wish to state that I do not donate to any political party.

Yours in hope,

Cecilija Rubenis

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/04/bushfires-likely-to-have-killed-about-5000-koalas-in-nsw-report-finds> accessed 26/07/20

² <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-11-21/koala-hospital-bushfire-gofundme-campaign-raises-million-dollars/11727130> accessed 26/07/20

³ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/online-fundraiser-bushfire-hit-koalas-tops-1m-aussie-dollars-191121070536219.html> accessed 26/07/20