

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## The Koala—saving our national icon from wild dogs



Urban residents throughout Eastern Australia need to know that wild dogs are having major impacts on koala populations in both peri-urban environments and regional areas. Unless wild dogs are controlled, they will continue to cause major impacts on populations of koalas already stressed due to habitat fragmentation and urban development.

Wild dogs often go unnoticed in these peri-urban areas as residents incorrectly assume that the dogs roaming throughout the parklands and streets are domestic dogs without collars. The Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre said that due to the success of wild dogs at adapting to modified environments, the distribution and density of wild dogs is increasing nationally.

The Australia Koala Foundation has been made aware of the impacts of wild dogs on koalas through its involvement with the National Wild Dog Management Advisory Group and National Wild Dog Facilitator, Greg Mifsud. Wild dogs can significantly reduce koala numbers over very short periods of time. Predation by wild dogs over a five-month period this year was identified as the key reason for a 40% decline of radio collared translocated and resident koalas within a conservation reserve within south-east Queensland. Koalas that have been relocated due to road development north of Brisbane have systematically been killed by wild dogs.

For instance, the Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications 'Inquiry into the status, health and sustainability of Australia's koala population' was advised that 1,306 koalas were attacked by dogs in south-east Queensland between 1997 and 2009. As a result of these attacks, 954 koalas were either killed or euthanased due to their injuries. In its report, the Senate Committees recommended that the Australia Government consider further wild dog control options in priority koala areas.

Meeting in Sydney this week, the National Wild Dog Management Advisory Group said that whilst the economic impact of wild dogs on agriculture is known to amount to \$48 million per annum, researchers until recently have under-estimated the impacts of wild dogs on the koala populations and other biodiversity. The Australian Koala Foundation is gravely concerned about populations of koalas on the NSW north coast where wild dog populations have been steadily been increasing and causing impacts on local residents, killing pets and livestock.

The Senate Committee supported the Invasive Animals CRC's proposal to assist koala conservation through wild dog control. Proposed research by the Invasive Animals CRC in conjunction with the Australian Koala Foundation would initially map and overlay the current extent of koala habitat with information on wild dog distribution and activity across Eastern Australia.

Mr Greg Mifsud said that for around \$55,000, this mapping exercise would provide the basis for prioritisation of areas requiring immediate management of wild dogs. The second stage of proposed research would employ intensive controllers at a cost of around \$120,000 each per local government area. This koala research remains contingent on the Invasive Animals CRC being successful in its research extension bid to 30 June 2017.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

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