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***WESTERN
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Plan to save NSW inland koalas moves ahead

The Western Woodlands Alliance has announced plans to map NSW koala populations and their habitats west of the Great Dividing Range as the first step towards the creation of a landscape-wide Western Woodlands Koala Park.

Ecologist with the Western Woodlands Alliance, David Paull said the group was calling on members of the public from to assist with their memories and records of koalas over the last 50 years.”

WWA spokesman Noel Plumb said, “Koalas and their woodland habitats are being lost rapidly to intensive over-logging, coal mining, coal seam gas extraction, land clearing, and climate change with record drought.”

“Koalas are nearly extinct in the mighty Pilliga Forest after decades of intensive industrial logging and fire management that has put the interests of the logging industry before the wildlife, the woodlands and the safety of the broader community”

Mr Paull said “There is a real risk koalas will become extinct west of the Great Dividing Range unless urgent action is taken to protect the species and the woodlands critical for their long-term survival.”

“We want the areas of koala habitat that are mapped to form the basis of a wonderful new conservation reserve, the Western Woodlands Koala Park, that would be managed to preserve our last wild koala populations,” Mr Paull said.

He said protecting koalas in a major new national park will also protect a whole web of life in these heavily cleared landscapes. “Koalas are like the canaries in the coal mine. When their population crashes, you know the whole ecosystem where they live is in deep trouble.

“The Pilliga Mouse, the Pygmy Possum, the Barking Owl, the Black-striped Wallaby and many other threatened species will also benefit. This is the time where big visions are needed.”

Mr Paull said anyone with recollections and information about koalas in their region could email dunnarts64@yahoo.com, call **0455 634 160** or Facebook Western Woodlands Alliance.

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