



# **KOALAS OR COAL MINES**

**How the federal  
government  
can help save  
Australia's most  
iconic species**

**KOALAS  
NOT COAL**

AUGUST 2024



## Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the stolen lands of the Traditional Custodians of the lands across so-called Australia on which we live, work, and gather. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We recognise the deep spiritual connection and enduring relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with Country, and that sovereignty was never ceded.

We honour the significance of the koala to many communities across the continent. Koalas are totems of many Aboriginal nations, including Gumbaynggirr of the Mid North Coast, Birpai of Port Macquarie, and Awabakal of the Hunter region. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land who have cared for the koala and its habitat for countless generations.

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## Endorsed by:



## Definitions/abbreviations

**ACT** - Australian Capital Territory

**BCA** - NSW Biodiversity and Conservation Act

**Conservation status** - Globally recognised system for classifying species into categories of risk of extinction

**DCCEEW** - Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (Australian federal environment department)

**DESI** - Department of Environment, Science, and Innovation (QLD state environment department)

**EIS** - Environmental Impact Statement

**EPBC Act** - Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, national environmental and threatened species law

**EN** - Endangered; conservation status for species facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future

**GHG** - Greenhouse gases

**Ha** - Hectares

**Kms** - Kilometers

**Listed** - Refers to listing of species or vegetation communities (EVCs) under state environment legislation or federal environment legislation

**LOM** - Life of mine

**Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e** - Million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent

**Mtpa** - Million tonnes per annum

**NC Act** - QLD Nature Conservation Act (1992)

**NGER** - National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Scheme

**NSW** - New South Wales

**NSW DCCEEW** - NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (NSW state environment department)

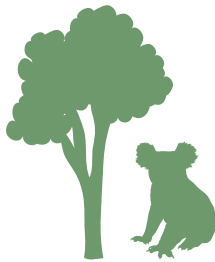
**NSW EPA** - New South Wales Environmental Protection Authority

**QLD** - Queensland

**ROM** - Run of mine, ore in its natural, unprocessed state

## Executive summary

If the 26 coal mining projects listed in this report are approved:



**11,644 hectares**  
of koala habitat would  
be cleared



**8.2 billion tonnes**  
of carbon pollution will be  
emitted from burning the coal  
over the life of the mines

This is over  
**116 square kms**



Equivalent to around  
**5,822 MCG** sized  
sporting fields



Or **41** times the size  
of Sydney's CBD



This is around **17x**  
Australia's annual carbon  
emissions, and more  
climate pollution than what  
Australia has emitted over the  
last decade (approximately over  
5 billion tonnes).



This is equivalent to  
the annual emissions  
of about **1.78 billion cars**.  
Currently there is estimated to  
be around 1.4 billion vehicles  
globally.



Australia's dirtiest coal-fired power station is the Loy Yang A power station, in recent years, Loy Yang A has emitted approximately 19 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually. It would take around 432 years for Loy Yang A power station to emit 8.2 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

The koala is one of Australia's most iconic native animals. The gum leaf eating, tree climbing, pouched marsupial is the quintessential animal symbol of the Australian bush, known and loved all over the world. Yet this iconic species is under serious threat.

Australia is the global leader in mammal extinctions<sup>1</sup>. More mammals have become extinct in Australia in recent centuries than any other continent on Earth. The primary drivers that have driven Australia's extinction crisis are loss of habitat through land clearing<sup>2</sup>, and increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events like bushfires and flooding due to climate change<sup>3</sup>.

Australia's koala populations face a very real prospect of extinction due to habitat destruction and the impacts

of climate change. Koala numbers across Queensland and NSW have been in decline for decades, and despite the threats to this much-loved marsupial being well understood and studied, the situation in recent years has gone from bad to worse.

The koala populations of Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory were listed as endangered on 12 February 2022, following the devastating 2019/2020 Black Summer bushfires. An animal that is endangered is close to extinction, meaning there aren't many of that type of animal left in the world. Even before the devastating bushfires, a 2020 NSW Parliamentary inquiry found that without urgent government intervention, koalas in NSW could be extinct in the wild by as early as 2050<sup>4</sup>.

Coal from mines in NSW and Queensland is mostly exported and burned overseas, creating pollution that is heating the Earth's atmosphere and threatening ecosystems and species the world over. No matter where pollution from Australia's coal is produced, the impacts on Australia's natural environments are felt. Some of the threats to koalas from climate change include increased droughts, heatwaves and bushfires, loss of important food trees, shrinking habitat and lower nutritional value in leaves due to carbon pollution.

Not only are proposed new coal mines in Queensland and NSW making climate change threats to koalas worse, proposed coal mines will directly clear important habitat for koalas, leading to the direct, sudden, and permanent loss of woodlands and forests that koalas depend on.

This report examines proposed new coal mining projects that are planning to clear koala habitat, including projects that are currently undergoing assessment under Australia's national environment laws (EPBC Act). Koala habitat often overlaps with other threatened species habitat, including endangered greater gliders, which will also be impacted by many of the projects referred to in this report.

This report concludes that at least 26 proposed new coal mines will clear important koala habitat, including 23 projects that are being assessed under the EPBC Act and seeking approval from the Albanese government.

**These 26 coal mining projects plan to clear a total of 11,644 hectares of koala habitat if granted approval by the federal government.**

That's just over 116 square kms, and around 5,822 MCG sized sporting fields, or 41 times the size of Sydney's CBD. These figures are likely to be conservative, as they are based on available information only. Several proposed coal projects will clear koala habitat but have not yet published exact figures.



GLENCORE

BHP



Of the proposed new coal mines and expansions, the three companies responsible for the biggest impacts on koalas are **Whitehaven Coal (7,594 ha)**, **Glencore (1,191 ha)**, and **BHP / BMA (1,169 ha)**.

**The proposed coal projects examined in this report would release an estimated 8.2 billion tonnes of climate pollution from the burning of the coal they would produce over their lifetime.**

That's more climate pollution than what Australia has emitted over the last decade (approximately 5.1 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub><sup>5,6</sup>).

In comparison, 8.2 billion tonnes of emissions is equivalent to the annual emissions of about 1.78 billion cars (the average car emits around 4.6 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually). Currently there is estimated to be around 1.4 billion vehicles globally.

The federal environment minister currently has the authority and power to reject new proposed coal mines and expansions on the basis of 'unacceptable impacts' to the koala, and other threatened species. Given the precarious future facing Australia's most iconic species, the federal environment minister can, and must act to protect the koala from the impacts of coal mines.

**This report recommends the federal government:**

1. Reject approvals for new coal mines and expansions that impact koalas and other threatened species, to address the threat of extinction from habitat destruction and climate change;
2. Put in place an immediate moratorium on the clearing of any further koala habitat for coal projects and review environmental approvals of projects approved to impact on koala habitat in the last two years;
3. End the reliance on biodiversity offsets that enable destruction of critical koala and other threatened species habitat, such as the greater glider;
4. Commit to a rapid phase out of fossil fuels, to safeguard endangered species like the koala from the devastating impacts of climate collapse;
5. Enact strong new nature laws that effectively protect threatened species and their habitat as well as comprehensively assess the climate impacts of proposed projects. Climate change, fuelled by coal and gas projects approved under the current Act, is a key threat to Australia's wildlife and habitat.

The figures listed in the report are taken from coal company documents and could be subject to changes as new application documents are published throughout ongoing assessment processes. For example, some projects listed in the report such as Blackwater North, Blackwater South and Walton are yet to produce complete Environmental Impact Statements that may publish updated figures on the extent of impacts to koala habitat. This report will be updated as new information or new figures from any new documents or statements are published by project proponents.



### Yancoal's Moolarben OC3 Expansion

Koala habitat to be cleared (ha): 113

Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e): 83

Yancoal's Moolarben coal mine is an existing thermal coal mine located in mid-Western NSW near the town of Ulan, on Wiradjuri Country. Yancoal is currently seeking state and federal approval for a proposed expansion of the mine, Moolarben OC3, which would extract an additional 40 million tonnes of thermal coal until 2034. The mine expansion is set to clear over 113 ha of endangered koala habitat and extends close to the edge of one of the oldest conservation reserves in NSW, the Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve. The NSW government Environment and Heritage Group's submission on the project says the coal mine expansion threatens koala habitat that is 'critical to the survival of the species' and "would significantly contribute" to four other animal species and one critically endangered ecological community becoming extinct in NSW<sup>7</sup>. Yancoal has acknowledged the project would displace a "critical" koala population.<sup>8</sup>

**Species likely to be impacted:** Large-eared pied bat, eastern cave bat, broad-headed snake, regent honeyeater, pin-tailed legless lizard, koala, swift parrot, squirrel glider



## Whitehaven Coal's Narrabri Stage 3 Extension Project

Koala habitat to be cleared (ha): 514.5

Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e): 471

Whitehaven Coal's Narrabri Underground Stage 3 Extension project is seeking to extend the life of its existing Narrabri thermal coal mine for another 13 years through to 2044. The mine is located on Gomerioi Country, near Narrabri NSW in the Gunnedah coal field adjacent to the Pilliga state forest. The expansion threatens 500ha of koala habitat. The Narrabri coal expansion will directly emit an average of 1.5m tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent a year<sup>9</sup>, making it the dirtiest thermal coal mine in Australia<sup>10</sup> (and in the top 4 most polluting coal mines in Australia).

**Species likely to be impacted:** Corben's Long-eared Bat, Pilliga mouse, koala



## GLENCORE

**Glencore's Hail Creek Eastern Margin Extension Project**

**Koala habitat to be cleared (ha): 599.55**

**Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e): Unknown**

Glencore are seeking to expand their Hail Creek mine on Widdi Country, clearing nearly 600ha of habitat for koala and other threatened species. Homevale National Park is located immediately east of the Project area. The existing Hail Creek Open Cut coal mine is one of the most polluting methane emitting mines on the planet. It is estimated to emit 20% of Australia's methane emissions from coal mining<sup>11</sup>, while accounting for just 1% of Australian coal production.

**Species likely to be impacted:** Koala, squatter pigeon, southern and central greater glider, glossy-black cockatoo, short-beaked Echidna



Glencore's Hail creek coal mine, the forest in the foreground is proposed to be cleared for the expansion of the 'Exevale pit'



### Vitrinite's Vulcan South

**Koala habitat to be cleared (ha): 770 ha**

**Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e): 23**

Vitrinite's Vulcan South mine on Barada Barna Country is proposed to clear 770ha of important koala habitat, and several other threatened species. The project would extract 1.9 million tonnes of coal for eight years. Almost all the project area is currently native bushland, in a largely fragmented area. Vitrinite is using environmental offsets to justify the project, which will do nothing to protect the koalas directly impacted by the proposed project. The Vulcan South project is directly adjacent to Vitrinite's existing Vulcan coal mine which is approved to clear 200 hectares of koala habitat. Vitrinite has a poor environmental compliance record at its Vulcan mine. The company was issued with an Environmental Protection Order by the Queensland government for releasing polluted water into creeks<sup>12</sup> and has breached its Commonwealth environmental conditions by clearing land outside of its approved project area<sup>13</sup>.

**Species likely to be impacted:** Koala, greater glider, squatter pigeon, northern quoll, ornamental snake, Australian painted snipe, glossy black cockatoo



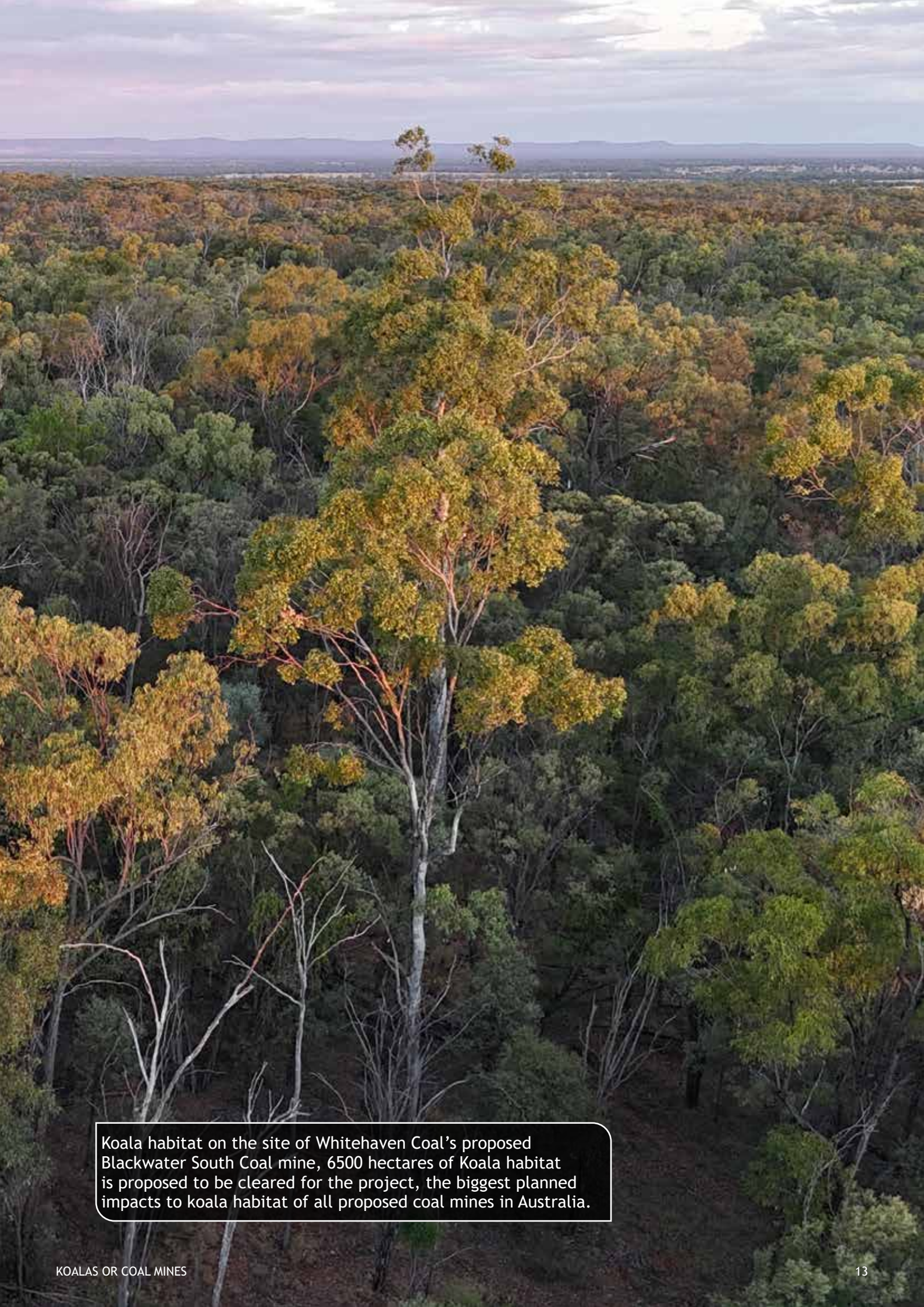
Koala habitat proposed to be cleared for Vitrinite's Vulcan South open cut coal mine



**Whitehaven Coal's Blackwater South  
Koala habitat to be cleared (ha): 6,884.6  
Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e): 1,574**

Whitehaven Coal's proposed Blackwater South coal mine is on Ghungalu Country near Blackwater in Central QLD. The project has the biggest planned impacts to koala habitat of all proposed coal mines in Australia. If approved, more than 6500 hectares of koala habitat will be cleared<sup>14</sup>, more than 3,200 MCG sized football fields. Whitehaven plans to mine up to 10 million tonnes of coal a year for 90 years, until the year 2112.

**Species likely to be impacted:** Greater glider, northern quoll, star finch, koala, ornamental snake, Yakka skink, southern snapping turtle, Fitzroy River turtle



Koala habitat on the site of Whitehaven Coal's proposed Blackwater South Coal mine, 6500 hectares of Koala habitat is proposed to be cleared for the project, the biggest planned impacts to koala habitat of all proposed coal mines in Australia.



**BHP Mitsubishi Alliance's Saraji East  
Koala habitat to be cleared (ha): 1,160.17  
Total lifetime emissions if approved (Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e): 442**

BHP Mitsubishi Alliance's Saraji East coal mine, located 80 km south-east of Emerald on Barada Barna Country, will clear 1160 ha of koala habitat<sup>15</sup>, equivalent to over 500 MCG sized football fields. Project EIS documents state that koalas may be killed or injured during vegetation clearing and may be struck by mining vehicles<sup>16</sup>. The project also plans to clear 748 hectares of habitat for the greater glider.<sup>16</sup> BMA's surveys recorded 18 greater gliders within and directly adjacent to the project disturbance footprint.<sup>18</sup> Greater gliders need large old trees with hollows for denning, the coal mine will clear this irreplaceable habitat. The mine proposes to dig up 11 million tonnes of coal each year until 2045.

**Species likely to be impacted:** Ornamental snake, Dunmall's snake, Brigalow scaly-foot, squatter pigeon, Australian painted snipe, little pied bat, koala, short-beaked echidna, greater glider



Peak Downs and Saraji coal mine

The Peabody logo consists of the word "Peabody" in a blue, sans-serif font with a horizontal line underneath.The YANCOAL logo features a stylized red and black flame-like symbol to the left of the word "YANCOAL" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below "YANCOAL" is the Chinese text "昆煤澳大利亞有限公司" in a smaller font.

### Peabody and Yancoal's Middlemount Coal Mine - Southern Open Cut

Koala habitat to be cleared (ha): 63.3

Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e): 53

Peabody and Yancoal's Middlemount coal mine, near Middlemount in Central Queensland is on Barada Barna Country. The project would extend the life of the mine until 2044 and extract an additional 112 million tonnes of coal. The project is seeking approval to dig up and divert a section of Roper creek that supports high quality riparian vegetation, including many large old trees growing on the banks of the creek that are used by koala and greater gliders. The extension of the Middlemount mine open cut pit would remove this section of Roper Creek and the woodlands lining its banks. The project seeks to clear over 60 hectares of koala and greater glider habitat. The presence of koalas and greater gliders utilising this important riparian habitat was recorded on surveys conducted by the coal company<sup>19</sup>. Surveys also noted the woodland along the creek is dominated by Queensland Blue gum, a preferred food source for koalas, and supports hollow bearing trees that provide important denning habitat for greater gliders.<sup>20</sup>

**Species likely to be impacted:** Koala, greater glider, squatter pigeon



Koala habitat on Roper Creek planned to be cleared for Yancoal's Middlemount coal mine expansion



### Magnetic South's Walton

**Koala habitat to be cleared (ha): 955.8**

**Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e): 38**

The Walton coal project is a new coal mine proposal near the town of Dingo on Ghungalu Country, 150 kms west of Rockhampton. The project is seeking to mine 1.95 million tonnes of coal a year for 10 years. The proposed coal mine site is surrounded by National Parks and state forest. The site borders Wallaby Lane nature refuge which would be impacted by one of the open cut pits. Wallaby Lane was established as a wildlife corridor linking Walton state forest to Taunton National Park. The area is home to a population of endangered Bridled Nail-tail Wallabies, a species previously thought to be extinct until the 1970s. This beautiful natural area supports high levels of biodiversity but could be destroyed by proposed coal mines. Walton coal mine is proposed by Magnetic South, a mining company owned by billionaire Sam Chong who are also looking to develop the neighbouring Gemini coal mine, near the Blackdown Tableland National Park. Mining company surveys identified 955.8 ha of koala habitat in the project area, the vast majority of this would be cleared for open cut pits and spoil dumps<sup>21</sup>. Koala scats were recorded on the project site.

**Species likely to be impacted:** Bridled nail-tail wallaby, koala, squatter pigeon, red goshawk, star finch, black-breasted buttonquail, northern quoll, ghost bat, greater glider



Koala habitat on the site of Magnetic South's proposed Walton coal mine, looking towards Blackdown Tableland National Park

## Background

### Habitat loss and climate change threaten koalas

Under federal and state (NSW and Queensland) environment laws, the koala is listed as endangered. According to the federal environment department<sup>7</sup>, the koala was uplisted to endangered due to;

- Increased frequency and intensity of drought, high temperatures and heat waves caused by climate change, which also increases prevalence and intensity of bushfires.
- A shrinking climatically suitable area for koalas to survive.
- Diseases, specifically koala retrovirus (KoRV) and chlamydia (*Chlamydia pecorum*).
- Habitat destruction resulting from land clearing and mining.

The federal government's National Recovery plan for the koala predicts that by 2030 more than 20% of koala habitat is likely to be impacted by climate change, and the loss of climatically suitable habitat because of climate change may outpace losses from land use change within the next decade<sup>8</sup>.

Climate change threatens Australia's koala population in complex and varied ways. Other impacts linked to climate change are increased susceptibility to diseases due to stress, changes in distribution and occurrence of feed trees, and the direct impacts of more severe and frequent bushfire events. WWF estimated that around 8,700 koalas were killed by the 2019/20 bushfires in NSW and Queensland alone<sup>24</sup>.

In 2020, a NSW Parliamentary inquiry found koalas could become extinct by 2050. A new report released in May 2024 found biodiversity in NSW has declined across nearly every indicator since the previous 2020 report<sup>25</sup>.

NSW, QLD, and federal koala action plans all list habitat destruction and climate change as the biggest direct threats to the survival of the koala, yet none of these plans adequately address the direct impacts from coal mining. Neither state nor federal governments have ever rejected a coal mine on the basis of unacceptable impacts to koalas.

Despite habitat destruction from mining, and climate change being acknowledged as key drivers of extinction for the koala, in 2020 the Morrison government granted approval for the Olive Downs coal mine<sup>26</sup> to clear more than 5,000 hectares of koala habitat<sup>27</sup>.

Since 2020, five coal mines have been approved in NSW by the state and federal governments. In Queensland, 10 projects have been approved by the state government, and so far, four of these have been approved by the Albanese government.

On the 4th of October 2022, federal Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek pledged "no new extinctions" in the coming decade<sup>28</sup>. Since then, the minister has made a string of announcements, particularly regarding the endangered koala, aiming to demonstrate she is protecting them. In a press release in Queensland, she

stated; "No one wants to imagine an Australia without koalas. The Australian Government is making sure our kids and grandkids will still be able to see koalas in the wild."<sup>29</sup>

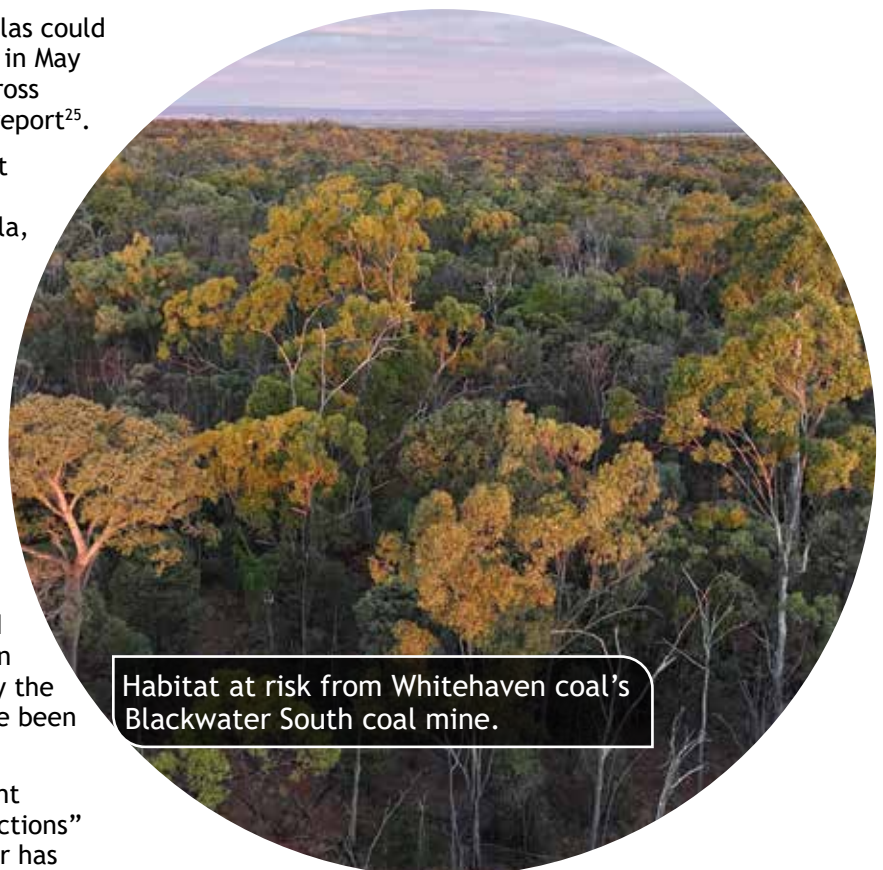
Yet, the Australian government is currently considering approval of 23 coal projects which will destroy koala habitat and emit billions of tonnes of climate pollution.

### Biodiversity offsets don't protect biodiversity

Mining companies in Australia are required to purchase environmental offsets for projects impacting biodiversity, but the use of offsets for coal mines has faced major criticisms. The federal biodiversity offset policy was introduced in 2012, and since then, biodiversity in Australia has continued to decline, and iconic species such as the koala have been elevated to endangered status. A wide range of studies indicate that offsets are ineffective at preventing biodiversity loss, and in fact, can enable habitat destruction<sup>30</sup>.

Offsets can never replace the unique ecological features of areas impacted by coal mining. Restoring or protecting functionally equivalent habitats (like-for-like) to replace those destroyed for mining is extremely difficult and success is rare. Long-term monitoring and maintenance of offsets is also challenging, with offset areas vulnerable to future pressures, including climate change, which undermines offset effectiveness<sup>31</sup>. The metrics for assessing offset success can be inadequate, and financial drivers may prioritise cost over ecological integrity<sup>32</sup>.

Ultimately, offsets fail to prevent biodiversity loss, and can be used to justify continued habitat destruction.



## Impacts on greater gliders

Koala habitat often overlaps with other threatened species habitat, including the greater glider. Greater gliders are the world's largest gliding possum, feed only on eucalypt leaves, and need tree hollows to nest in. Like the koala, greater gliders are also facing extinction due to habitat destruction and climate change.

Greater gliders are also threatened by new and proposed coal mines in NSW and QLD. By preventing the destruction of koala habitat for coal mines, species like the greater glider will also be protected. The southern and central greater glider subspecies were listed as endangered under federal environment laws in 2022, but there is currently no action plan to save these animals.

Gliders are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of habitat clearing, because of the time it takes for tree hollows to develop and the very small home ranges the animals occupy. In some instances, hollows can take up to 100 years to provide suitable habitat for gliders. That means it is crucial that all current suitable habitat be protected, given what little fragmented habitat remains for the species.

Some of the proposed new coal mines with the worst greater glider impacts include:

- Yancoal's Middlemount coal mine in central Queensland, which will destroy 63ha of glider habitat
- BHP / BMAs Saraji coal mine, set to clear 748ha of potential habitat for greater glider
- Vitrinite's Vulcan South coal mine will clear 39ha of glider habitat
- Whitehaven Coal's Winchester South coal mine with plans to clear 132ha of greater glider habitat
- Peabody's Coppabella coal mine expansion set to clear 220ha of greater glider habitat



Greater glider observed by coal company surveys on the Vulcan South coal mine site

## Methodology

Proposed new coal mines undergoing assessment under the EPBC Act were identified through the Department of Climate Change Energy Water and Environment's EPBC Act public portal<sup>33</sup>. As of July 2024, there are 38 proposed new coal mining projects and expansions that have been referred for assessment under the EPBC Act and are seeking approvals from the Commonwealth government. These projects were scrutinised to determine the proponents' anticipated impacts on koala habitat, including direct loss of habitat from clearing and any residual impacts. Environment Impact Statement (EIS) and referral documents, such as ecology and biodiversity assessments were examined to determine the scale of impacts to koala habitat from the proposed coal mining projects. These projects were placed into 'category 1', with results displayed in Table 1.

Projects undergoing EPBC assessment where project documents indicate likely impacts to koala habitat, but precise figures for the area planned to be impacted were not given, were also included in the analysis. These projects were placed into 'category 2', with results displayed in Table 2. BHP Mitsubishi alliance's Peak Downs continuation project falls into this category. The project is yet to undergo a detailed environmental impact assessment so no precise figures on the area of koala habitat to be impacted are available. However, the initial advice statement states that koalas and greater gliders have been recorded in areas planned for clearing, including in riparian woodland on Ripstone creek which is proposed to be diverted to facilitate mining<sup>34</sup>. The project area is over 4000 hectares in size<sup>35</sup>, with the southern half of the project area being mostly remnant native vegetation<sup>36</sup>. If precise figures for projects in category 2 were available, the figures for the total area of koala habitat to be impacted by proposed coal mines detailed in this report would be significantly larger.

Some proposed coal mining projects that have not yet been referred for assessment under the EPBC Act were included in the analysis. If an EPBC referral was likely, and legally required, due to anticipated impacts on protected matters listed under the Act, the project was included in the analysis. Where state-based approval documents specified a future EPBC referral for a project, that project was also included in this analysis. For example, Glencore's Hail Creek Open Cut Coal mine expansion project is not currently referred for assessment under the EPBC Act, however its application to the Queensland government for an amendment to its Environmental Authority states that the project will be referred for EPBC assessment in the future and Glencore anticipates nearly 600 hectares of koala habitat would be cleared<sup>37</sup>. Therefore, this project, and other projects in a similar stage of the assessment process were included in the analysis. These projects were placed into 'category 3', with results displayed in Table 3.

Methods for estimating coal combustion emissions from the projects is detailed in Appendix A - Koala and Climate Impacts Methodology and References.

## Results

### Koala habitat destruction of proposed new coal mines:

- At least 26 proposed new coal mines will clear important koala habitat, including 23 projects that are currently being assessed under the EPBC Act and seeking approval from the Albanese government.
- These 26 coal projects are proposing to clear a combined total of at least 11,644 hectares of koala habitat.
- The area of koala habitat that is proposed to be cleared by the coal mines detailed in this report is equivalent to 116 square kms, which is around 5,822 MCG sized sporting fields, or 41 times the size of Sydney's CBD.

These figures are likely to be conservative, as they are based on coal company estimates of planned koala habitat clearance, taken from Environmental Impact Statements and other assessment process documents. The figures are also likely to be conservative as they are based on available information only and several proposed coal projects that will clear koala habitat have not yet published this information. (see projects listed in Table 2).

### Climate pollution of proposed new coal mines:

- The projects would produce an estimated 8.2 billion tonnes of climate pollution through emissions from the burning of coal.
- That's more climate pollution than what Australia has emitted over the last decade (approximately 5.1 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>)
- By comparison, the average passenger vehicle emits about 4.6 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. 8.2 billion tonnes of emissions are equivalent to the annual emissions of around 1.78 billion cars. Currently there is estimated to be around 1.4 billion vehicles globally.

The vast majority of climate pollution from coal mines is from the burning of the coal that is mined, known as combustion emissions. The Australian government does not include the combustion emissions from coal mined in Australia in national emissions inventories and argues that accounting for the pollution from burning Australian coal is the responsibility of the countries Australia sells coal to. This has been labelled the 'drug dealers' defence and is extremely problematic because it results in incomplete accounting of Australia's real emissions from these coal projects. No matter where pollution from Australia's coal is produced, the impacts on Australia's climate and natural environments are felt.

Coal mines also produce climate pollution through fugitive methane emissions that are directly released into the atmosphere during the mining process. These emissions have been excluded from the analysis in this report which has focussed on climate pollution from combustion emissions of coal mines that the Australian government is not accounting for. Fugitive emissions

are reported to regulators and included in Australia's national emissions inventories but are grossly underestimated and under-reported. Australia's methane emissions from coal are 60 percent higher than what it reports to the United Nations, according to the International Energy Agency's annual methane tracker<sup>38</sup>.

### Project Categories:

1. Projects with proponent estimated hectares of koala habitat to be cleared, currently being assessed under the EPBC Act - Table 1
2. Projects being assessed under the EPBC Act where project documents indicate it is likely koala habitat will be cleared, but precise figures are not yet available - Table 2
3. Projects with plans to clear koala habitat that have not yet been assessed under the EPBC Act but are likely be referred for assessment - Table 3



**Table 1: Area of koala habitat to be cleared by proposed coal mines currently being assessed under the EPBC Act, and total lifetime carbon emissions of the proposed mines (lifetime coal combustion emissions Mt)**

(Refer to Appendix A for references)

NSW			
Project name	Proponent	Koala habitat to be cleared (ha)	Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> -e)
Boggabri Coal Mine Modification 10	Idemitsu	84.48	61
Glendell Continued Operations Project	Glencore	156	210
Moolarben OC3 Extension	Yancoal	113	83
Narrabri UG Stage 3 Extension	Whitehaven Coal	514.5	471
Ulan Coal Modification 6	Glencore	11.2	62
<b>Total</b>		<b>879.18</b>	<b>887</b>
QLD			
Project name	Proponent	Koala habitat to be cleared (ha)	Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> -e)
Baralaba South	AMCI	27	98
Blackwater North	Whitehaven Coal	26.9	433
Blackwater South	Whitehaven Coal	6884.6	1574
Coppabella Mine Humbug Gully project	Peabody	219.19	69
Lake Vermont Meadowbrook Project	Jellinbah	109.1	289
Middlemount Coal Mine - Southern Open Cut	Peabody / Yancoal	63.3	53
New Lenton Coal Project	Bowen Coking Coal	218	33
Rolleston Continuation	Glencore	425	82
Saraji East	BHP / BMA	1160.17	442
Saraji Mine Grevillea Pit Continuation Project	BHP / BMA	9.7	121
Vulcan South	Vitrinite	770	23
Vulcan Coal Mine - Matilda Pit	Vitrinite	83.9	Unknown
Walton	Magnetic South	955.8	38
Winchester South	Whitehaven Coal	168.9	558
<b>Total</b>		<b>10,165.76</b>	<b>3,813</b>
<b>Total combined koala habitat to be cleared and GHG emissions of new coal mining projects being assessed under national environment laws.</b>		<b>11,044.94</b>	<b>4,700</b>

**Table 2: Projects being considered under the EPBC Act with unreported estimated hectares of koala habitat to be cleared**

NSW			
Project name	Proponent	Koala habitat to be cleared (ha)	Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> -e)
Newstan Mine Extension Project	Banpu (Centennial)	948.7 ha of potential koala habitat was identified in the Project Area. It is unclear how much vegetation will be cleared for the expansion of the underground mine.	63
QLD			
Project name	Proponent	Koala habitat to be cleared (ha)	Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> -e)
Moorlands Open Cut Coal mining project	Cuesta Coal / Huaxin Energy	University of Queensland researchers and the Clermont community have raised concerns about the project impacts on the koala population. 1,267 ha of native vegetation is to be cleared, including 5 river-km of riparian corridors that provide connectivity of remnant vegetation and the Blair Athol State Forest.	124
Dawson West Mining Project	Dawson West Coal Management	Koalas considered likely to occur, habitat and suitable feed trees identified. 11 trees with scratch marks were recorded. Greater Gliders recorded during surveys. No details on the area of habitat to be cleared.	253
Peak Downs Mine Continuation project	BHP / BMA	No figures on the total area of impacted habitat available. Several records of koala and greater glider presence on the site were recorded by surveys in areas planned to be cleared.	2,768
<b>Total Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions if approved (Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e)</b>			<b>3,208</b>

Table 3: Projects with plans to clear koala habitat that have not yet been referred but are likely to be referred

NSW			
Project name	Proponent	Koala habitat to be cleared (ha)	Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> -e)
Maules Creek expansion	Whitehaven	Unknown	300
QLD			
Project name	Proponent	Koala habitat to be cleared (ha)	Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> -e)
Gemini Coal mine	Magnetic South	Unknown	80
Hail Creek Eastern Margin Extension Project	Glencore	599.55	Unknown
<b>Total</b>		<b>599.55</b>	<b>380</b>



Combined koala habitat to be cleared (hectares): 11,644



Combined lifetime coal combustion emissions from all coal projects, if approved: 8.2 billion tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>-e



Clearfelling of Leard State Forest to make way for the expansion of the Boggabri coal mine, 2014.

## Conclusion and recommendations

Given the dire future endangered koalas face, in the context of historic fragmentation and continuing destruction of their habitat, and the devastating impacts climate change is already having on the species, all projects listed in this report, and any future proposed new coal mines and expansions that impact koala habitat, must be rejected by the Australian federal government.

The window of time to take action to prevent further climate-fuelled catastrophes, biodiversity loss, extinction, and runaway climate collapse is rapidly shrinking. There has never been a more important time to act to safeguard Australia's most iconic species.

Despite broken federal environment laws that have allowed the expansion of the coal industry unabated, the government has the power to act now and reject these coal mines.

The consequences of inaction could see Australia's most iconic species driven to extinction. The best way to tackle the extinction crisis and save the koala, is to protect their habitat, and take urgent action on climate change.

Rejecting these destructive coal mines will address both crises, protecting thousands of hectares of koala habitat from being cleared, and preventing billions of tonnes of carbon pollution from being emitted. There has never been a more urgent time to act.

This report recommends the federal government:

1. Reject approvals for new coal mines and expansions that impact koalas and other threatened species, to address the threat of extinction from habitat destruction and climate change;
2. Put in place an immediate moratorium on the clearing of any further koala habitat for coal projects and review environmental approvals of projects approved to impact on koala habitat in the last two years;
3. End the reliance on biodiversity offsets that enable destruction of critical koala and other threatened species habitat, such as the greater glider;
4. Commit to a rapid phase out of fossil fuels, to safeguard endangered species like the koala from the devastating impacts of climate collapse;
5. Enact strong new nature laws that effectively protect threatened species and their habitat as well as comprehensively assess the climate impacts of proposed projects. Climate change, fuelled by coal and gas projects approved under the current Act, is a key threat to Australia's wildlife and habitat.



Habitat at risk from Whitehaven coal's proposed Winchester South coal mine.

## Appendix A - Koala and Climate Impacts Methodology and References

### Estimating Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions

Lifetime coal combustion emissions for projects have been estimated for all projects where data availability permitted. Three different approaches were used (in order of priority):

1. Where an EIS (or similar) has been produced in support of the approval of the project and this contains a figure for lifetime **estimated coal combustion emissions** for the mine, this figure was used directly.
2. Where an EIS (or similar) has been produced in support of the approval of the project and this contains a figure for lifetime **estimated product coal** production and product coal type has been specified (including any ratio for the split between product types). This information was used to calculate lifetime coal combustion emissions using National Greenhouse Accounts Factors<sup>39</sup> with all thermal coal assumed to be bituminous grade.
3. Approval application documents (or JORC statements) were used to estimate lifetime **run-of-mine (ROM) coal** production and product coal type (including any ratio for the split between product types). The yield of product coal from ROM was assumed to be 80% unless specified by the project proponent. This information was used to calculate lifetime coal combustion emissions using National Greenhouse Accounts Factors.



Blackwater South planned location  
Koala impacts (ha): 6533.6 -the biggest  
planned impacts to koala habitat of all  
proposed coal mines in Australia.

**Table 1: Area of koala habitat to be cleared by proposed coal mines currently being assessed under the EPBC Act, and total lifetime carbon emissions of the proposed mines (lifetime coal combustion emissions Mt)**

NSW			
Project name	Proponent	Koala habitat to be cleared (ha)	Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> -e)
Boggabri Coal Mine Modification 10	Idemitsu	84.48 <sup>40</sup>	61 <sup>41</sup>
Glendell Continued Operations Project	Glencore	156 <sup>42</sup>	210 <sup>43</sup>
Moolarben OC3 Extension	Yancoal	113 <sup>44</sup>	83 <sup>45</sup>
Narrabri UG Stage 3 Extension	Whitehaven Coal	514.5 <sup>46</sup>	471 <sup>47</sup>
Ulan Coal Modification 6	Glencore	11.2 <sup>48</sup>	62 <sup>49</sup>
<b>Total</b>		<b>879.18</b>	<b>887</b>
QLD			
Project name	Proponent	Koala habitat to be cleared (ha)	Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> -e)
Baralaba South	AMCI	27 <sup>50</sup>	98.1 <sup>51</sup>
Blackwater North	Whitehaven Coal	26.9 <sup>52</sup>	433 <sup>53</sup>
Blackwater South	Whitehaven Coal	6884.6 <sup>54</sup>	1574 <sup>55</sup>
Coppabella Mine Humbug Gully project	Peabody	219.19 <sup>56</sup>	69 <sup>57</sup>
Lake Vermont Meadowbrook Project	Jellinbah	109.1 <sup>58</sup>	289.1 <sup>59</sup>
Middlemount Coal Mine - Southern Open Cut	Peabody / Yancoal	63.3 <sup>60</sup>	53 <sup>61</sup>
New Lenton Coal Project	Bowen Coking Coal	218 <sup>62</sup>	33 <sup>63</sup>
Rolleston Continuation	Glencore	425 <sup>64</sup>	82.2 <sup>65</sup>
Saraji East	BHP / BMA	1160.17 <sup>66</sup>	442 <sup>67</sup>
Saraji Mine Grevillea Pit Continuation Project	BHP / BMA	9.7 <sup>68</sup>	121 <sup>69</sup>
Vulcan South	Vitrinite	770 <sup>70</sup>	23 <sup>71</sup>
Vulcan Coal Mine - Matilda Pit	Vitrinite	83.9 <sup>72</sup>	Unknown
Walton	Magnetic South	955.8 <sup>73</sup>	38 <sup>74</sup>
Winchester South	Whitehaven Coal	168.9 <sup>75</sup>	558 <sup>76</sup>
<b>Total</b>		<b>10,165.76</b>	<b>3,813</b>
<b>Total combined koala impacts and GHG emissions of new coal mining projects being assessed under national environment laws.</b>		<b>11,044.94</b>	<b>4,700</b>

**Table 2: Projects being considered under the EPBC Act with unreported estimated hectares of koala habitat to be cleared**

NSW			
Project name	Proponent	Koala habitat to be cleared (ha)	Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> -e)
Newstan Mine Extension Project	Banpu (Centennial)	948.7 ha of potential koala habitat was identified in the Project Area. <sup>77</sup> It is unclear how much vegetation will be cleared for the expansion of the underground mine.	63 <sup>78</sup>
QLD			
Project name	Proponent	Koala habitat to be cleared (ha)	Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> -e)
Moorlands Open Cut Coal mining project	Cuesta Coal / Huaxin Energy	University of Queensland researchers and the Clermont community have raised concerns about the project impacts on the koala population. <sup>79</sup> 1,267 ha of native vegetation is to be cleared, including 5 river-km of riparian corridors that provide connectivity of remnant vegetation and the Blair Athol State Forest. <sup>80</sup>	124 <sup>81</sup>
Dawson West Mining Project	Dawson West Coal Management	Koalas considered likely to occur, habitat and suitable feed trees identified. 11 trees with scratch marks were recorded. Greater Gliders recorded during surveys. No details on the area of habitat to be cleared. <sup>82</sup>	253 <sup>83</sup>
Peak Downs Mine Continuation project	BHP / BMA	No figures on the total area of impacted habitat available. Several records of koala and greater glider presence on the site were recorded by surveys in areas planned to be cleared <sup>84</sup>	2,768 <sup>85</sup>
<b>Total Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e)</b>			<b>3,208</b>

Table 3: Projects with plans to clear koala habitat that have not yet been referred but are likely to be referred

NSW			
Project name	Proponent	Koala habitat to be cleared (ha)	Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> -e)
Maules Creek expansion	Whitehaven	Unknown	300 <sup>86</sup>
QLD			
Project name	Proponent	Koala habitat to be cleared (ha)	Lifetime Coal Combustion emissions (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> -e)
Gemini Coal mine	Magnetic South	Unknown	80 <sup>87</sup>
Hail Creek Eastern Margin Extension Project	Glencore	599.55 <sup>88</sup>	Unknown
<b>Total</b>		<b>599.55</b>	<b>380</b>

## Appendix B - State government and financial institutions recommendations

### State government recommendations

State governments are also responsible for approving new coal mines and coal mine expansions. In light of the findings, this report recommends that the QLD and NSW state governments also:

1. Put in place an immediate moratorium on the clearing of any further koala habitat for coal and gas and review environmental approvals of projects approved to impact on koala habitat in the last two years;
2. Deliver the promised Great Koala National Park in NSW, put in place a moratorium on logging in this area until park boundaries are finalised, and phase out native forest logging in NSW and QLD;
3. Reject any approvals for new coal mines and expansions, including those that impact koalas and greater gliders and other threatened species to address the threat of extinction from habitat destruction and climate change;
4. End the reliance on biodiversity offsets that enable destruction of critical koala and greater glider habitat;
5. Commit to a rapid phase out of fossil fuels, to safeguard endangered species like the koala from the devastating impacts of climate collapse;
6. Enact strong new or updated state-based nature laws that effectively protect threatened species and their habitat as well as comprehensively assess the climate impacts of proposed coal projects.

### Finance recommendations

A handful of companies are responsible for the majority of coal mining proposed in koala habitat. Of the proposed new coal mines and expansions, the three companies responsible for the biggest potential impacts on koalas are Whitehaven Coal (7,594.9 ha), Glencore (1,191.75 ha), and BHP / BMA (1,169.87 ha). Any bank, investor, joint venture partner or insurer supporting these companies risks enabling the extinction of the koala in the wild, and campaigns from community groups to prevent further financing of coal mines with plans to destroy endangered koala habitat.

This report recommends that financial institutions, insurance companies, joint venture partners, and investors:

1. Rule out any new investments or arrangement of finance for any company pursuing new or expanded coal mines in koala habitat. Including but not limited to, Yancoal, Whitehaven Coal, Glencore, and BHP / BMA
2. Meet with community groups to discuss concerns regarding the impacts of new coal mines and expansions on koalas, and the climate impacts of these projects.

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