

Great Koala National Park

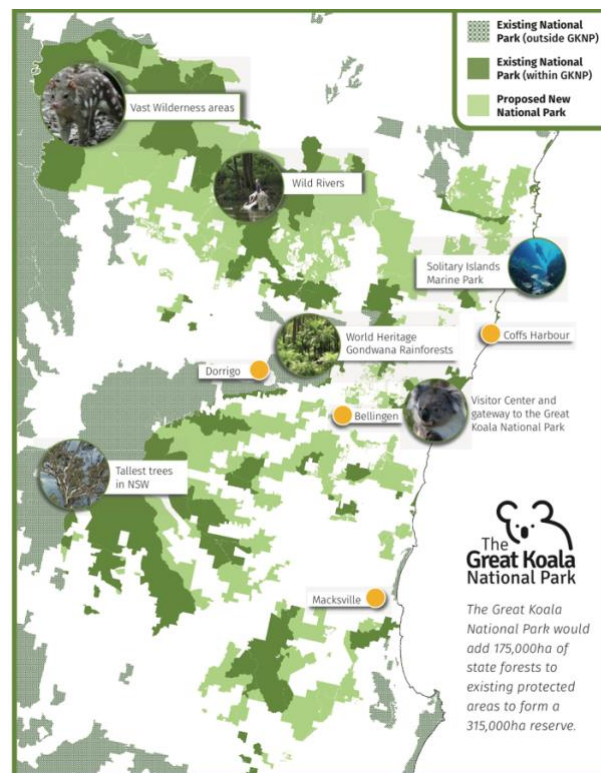
Economic impact assessment and environmental benefit analysis

About the Great Koala National Park

The Great Koala National Park (GKNP) is proposed as Australia’s first large national park dedicated to protecting koala habitat. The Park will add 175,000 hectares of native state forests to existing protected areas to establish a 315,000-hectare reserve on the NSW Mid North Coast.

The site is delimited by the boundaries of two metapopulations of koalas: the Coffs Harbour-Guy Fawkes and Bellinger-Nambucca-Macleay metapopulations, which contain up to 4,550 koalas, or approximately 20% of the NSW population.

The proposed Park stretches across five local government areas – Coffs Harbour, Clarence Valley, Bellinger, Nambucca, and Kempsey.



Findings from the University of Newcastle study

The University of Newcastle’s study of the proposed Great Koala National Park comprised two areas of focus: an economic impact assessment and an environmental benefit analysis. Over these two areas, the research demonstrated that the Park would generate additional regional economic output of \$1.2 billion over the next 15 years and \$1.7 billion in biodiversity value.

Economic Impact Analysis (EIA)

The EIA assessed the potential regional impact of the Park on the five local government areas (LGAs) over 15 years, starting in 2021. This was derived by estimating expenditure across three stages: park establishment, park management and visitor expenditure.

Over 15 years, the assessment shows an increase in regional economic output of \$1.2 billion of which \$531 million will flow into the region’s economy including \$330 million in additional wages.

The research found that the region will benefit from:

- the creation of 9,800+ additional full-time equivalent jobs
- investment in the region of \$145 million in capital expenditure over 15 years (mapping, tenure changes and habitat restoration plus construction of visitor centre, visitor infrastructure and tracks and trails)
- investment in the region of \$128 million in operating expenditure over 15 years (ongoing construction, habitat management and operation of park-based activities)
- a boost to the visitor economy of 1 million visitors to the region who will spend \$412 million.

The research notes that there is significant potential to increase the assumptions for international and domestic overnight visitor numbers and visitor expenditure. The flow-on impacts across the supply-chain, and via increased consumption in the region, are estimated to be significant.

The research team considered the impact of the establishment of the Park on the forestry sector. They found that a total of 675 direct and related forestry full-time equivalent jobs would be phased-out over a 10-year state forest native logging industry transition period. This estimate is based on 2016 census data indicating that there are 180 direct state forest native logging jobs in the five local government areas. The estimate is also informed by industry employment data from the sector.

Environmental Benefit Assessment (EBA)

The environmental benefits of transitioning 175,000 hectares of state forests to national park primarily relate to preserving koalas and their habitat and, more broadly, preserving other aspects of the natural environment, including increased biodiversity.

The report notes that, given the significant decline in the koala population as a result of the recent drought and bushfire season, the environmental value of each individual koala is now significantly higher than a decade ago.

The assessment shows that the environmental benefits equate to added biodiversity value of approximately:

- \$530 million for the NSW population
- \$1.7 billion for all Australians.

The EBA used a methodology known as 'willingness to pay', which places an economic value on the community's willingness to invest in the preservation of biodiversity. This well-established methodology to value biodiversity was peer reviewed in 2020 by an international research consortium including researchers from the Australian National University. It has been used across the world to value biodiversity including by Deloitte Access Economics in 2017 to assess the economic, social and icon value of the Great Barrier Reef.

For a copy of the Great Koala National Park economic impact assessment and an environmental benefit analysis go to: www.hrf.com.au/gknp