



Koala News



Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland Bayside Branch

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INQUIRY INTO THE STATUS, HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY OF AUSTRALIA'S KOALA POPULATION

Australian Greens Leader Bob Brown successfully moved for a new Senate inquiry to assess the threats to and management of Koalas across the country.

The inquiry will commence early this year. Terms of reference for the inquiry are as follows:

- (1) The following matter be referred to the Senate Environment, Communications and the Arts References Committee for inquiry on the first day of sitting of 2011 and report by 1 June 2011:

The status, health and sustainability of Australia's koala population

- (2) In undertaking the inquiry, the committee must consider:
 - a. The iconic status of the koala and the history of its management;
 - b. Estimates of koala populations and the adequacy of current counting methods;
 - c. Knowledge of koala habitat;
 - d. Threats to koala habitat such as logging, land clearing, poor management, attacks from feral and domestic animals, disease and roads, and urban development;
 - e. The listing of the koala under the EPBC Act;
 - f. The adequacy of the National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy;
 - g. Appropriate future regulation for the protection of koala habitat;
 - h. Interaction of state and federal laws and regulations; and
 - i. Any other related matters.

The final date for submissions was **08 February 2011**. The reporting date is **01 June 2011**.

Wildlife Queensland has made a submission based on its numerous submissions on the Koala, its habitat and related matters in recent years. Issues raised include that key habitat continues to be cleared and fragmented.

ROLE OF HORROR

The Koala News regularly reports stories of the struggle for survival of individual Koalas. These are just a few of featured in the past few years.



Cooma's mother was killed when a tree was felled for development, August 2007. Cooper was found with no mother in sight, October 2007.



Tubs' mother was hit and killed by a bus, March 2008.



Constable Clancy was found in the pouch of her dead mother on a roadside. August 2008.



Kelly's mother died as a result of a vicious dog attack, August 2009. Jazzy was found wandering alone, September 2009.



Murphy was found alone, exhausted and dehydrated, May 2010.



Travis was travelling on his mother's back when they were hit by a car and she was killed, October 2010.

These are some of the real faces of our failure to adequately protect Koalas and their habitat to date. Some never recover from their trauma, while others are successfully raised and/or rehabilitated and released back into the dangerous environments from which they came.

There are many people who act to make their yards safer for Koalas, volunteer to plant Koala trees, care for injured, sick or orphaned Koalas or donate to wildlife organizations, but until there is an informed and coordinated approach from Federal, State and Local Governments to address the key issues of habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, disease, road and dog kills, these caring individuals are fighting an uphill battle.

WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND KOALA LEGISLATION?

Talk to anyone who has anything to do with interpreting the implications of Koala legislation in its current form in South East Queensland and you will get a response tinged with bemusement or anger, or both.

Koala habitat management policy for South East Queensland is in a state of change, with no clear guidelines available.



From existing policies and provisions, the following can be discerned:

An area can be located within or outside of the Koala Assessable Development Area on the Map of Assessable Development Area (*sic*) (Schedule 1, Part 1 of the *South East Queensland Koala Conservation State Planning Regulatory Provisions* (SPRP) (DERM 2010)).

If it is within this area, almost any action that would result in the removal of Koala trees (with the exemption of some development types and previously approved developments) requires assessment under the SPRP and will require offsets under that instrument.

If the land is outside of the Koala Assessable Development Area on the Map of Assessable Development Area, a land owner may need to address requirements for Koala habitat offsets under the *State Planning Policy (SPP) 2/10; Koala Conservation in South East Queensland* (DERM 2010).

The Guidelines for determining compliance under the SPP are currently in preparation

by the State Government and Local Councils, who are responsible for administering the SPP.

The SPP is designed to be implemented through local planning instruments and structure plans.

The State Government has devolved primary responsibility for Koala issues to Local Government where resourcing is generally inadequate.

While the Local Government level is the logical level at which planning and assessment of Koala issues should be addressed, the State Government did little to forewarn or forearm Local Governments in South East Queensland to cope with this new burden of responsibility. Local Governments, already in a state of flux due to enforced amalgamations, have been left to deal as best they can. And still, almost one year later, there are no guidelines for Local Government to work with in regards to compliance of developments with the State Planning Policy.

This result is in strong contrast to the statements made by the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, the Honourable Kate Jones when launching the State Planning Policy in **May 2009**, following a treatise on the plight of the Koala: *“The centrepiece of our blueprint to prevent further decline of koala numbers is a new State Planning Policy for koalas which will be in force by the end of the year after community consultation. The Policy will give local authorities and other decision makers a **clear framework** to prioritise protection of koala habitat when they are preparing planning schemes and assessing developments.”*

And to think that the evidence indicates Koalas are running out of time! There is definitely no time to drop the ball so spectacularly.

If you would like to contribute to future editions of the Koala News, please contact Paulette Jones paulette@biodiversity.tv

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author and/or contributors and are not necessarily those of the Society.