TREGEAGLE LANDCARE GROUP

Submission from Tregeagle Landcare Group to the Senate enquiry into status, health and sustainability of Australia's koala population

The Tregeagle Landcare Group (TLG) was established in November 2009.Tregeagle is a small rural community located on the Northern Rivers of NSW approx 15km north east of Lismore.

Australia's unique and fascinating wildlife is a vital factor to attracting foreign tourists and the koala plays an important role in this area as an Australian icon and contributes to the economic benefits tourism brings to Australia.

Koalas were formerly widespread in NSW and now remaining populations are concentrated in a few areas of the State including the North Coast of NSW.
There have been a number of koala studies carried out in this area of NSW for the development of koala management strategies. However it is difficult to provide estimate of populations numbers as this requires resources and funding.

A NSW State Recovery Plan has been developed for the species and has a number of recommended actions to improve outcomes for conservation of koalas and their habitat including updating and facilitating legislation, identifying habitat and on ground management actions, research and community awareness.

Tregeagle Landcare Group is located in an area of "prime koala habitat" as determined by Lismore City Council and TLG acknowledge the importance of koalas and are committed to improving and maintaining habitat in the area. The TLG consists of a diverse range of land uses including macadamia plantations, beef cattle, rural acreages and native bushland. Members of the group are keen to maintain and improve existing prime koala habitat, establish and promote koala corridors as means of assisting in the recovery of koalas and enhancing biodiversity in the area.

Threats to the continued survival of the local population are numerous and include consequences of disease, dogs, motor vehicles, continued destruction of habitat and urban development. It is believed that the long term conservation and management of the local population is in the hands of local government and the community.

The koala is listed as a vulnerable species under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1999 however it is not listed under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 which seams to be a contradiction when considering the declining populations and the iconic status of the koala and the importance of this species to these local areas and Australia.

The TLG believes the key to recovery of the species and maintaining an iconic status is consistent legislation, regulation and protection practices and the ongoing commitment of resources by all levels government, community groups, volunteers and landowners. National monitoring and evaluation programs on koala management strategies would also assist in future decision making processes. Establishing a rewards system for community groups, volunteers, landowners involvement in koala conservation be it financial, recognition or acknowledgement will also support this process.

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President
Tregeagle Landcare Group