

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Inquiry into the status, health and sustainability of Australia's koala population

*Submission made by Birkdale Progress Association Inc
Redland City, Koala Coast, Queensland*

The following short submission is based on the observations and actions of a community group over almost twenty years. The Birkdale Progress Association Inc plays a role in advocacy for the koala, monitoring, recording and reporting and acting as umbrella to several bushcare groups operating under the care of the local government in Redland City, Koala Coast, Queensland.

Birkdale Progress Association Inc was formed in 1994 following a community struggle to save koala habitat at the north of Redlands, then of shire status and situated in the northern area of Redlands. Since then the Association has taken a keen interest in trying to save corridors and ensure the recognition of the koala, particularly in northern areas. This has involved preparing submissions even following through to the planning and environment court in an attempt to save corridors and sometimes just individual trees. To our great disappointment, the original Queensland Government State Koala Map (SPP 1/97) did not go far enough and failed to include recognition of the koala in the creek tributaries adjacent to the coast, choosing to stop at a line roughly equating to Old Cleveland Road East. Obviously both local and state governments were not prepared to forego any development rights whatsoever to accommodate koalas in the areas then or to be later set aside for development. A scan of the advocacy on behalf of the koala by our Association to all levels of government is proof of the "deaf ear" approach that can now be seen historically as having led to the plummeting number of koalas in Koala Coast.

These coastal catchments contain some of the richest koala feeding and breeding areas. That same map mentioned above, however, did include this area as "balance area" although this gave no legislative teeth to the urban koala. At least, however, it did give some acknowledgment of the koala, unlike current mapping that affords no mention of koala values in these same areas beyond some designated koala zones, meanwhile forgetting about the land in between. This position remains much the same today although some areas of significance have been added but these remain in isolation, unconnected to other areas included on the mapping. Without correct official mapping, which we believe to

be as simple as painting the map green, we believe our “urban koalas” have missed out and again and again we have seen developments allowed in areas where koalas feed and roam and where there has been nothing in the Town Plan to protect these other than an attempt at wildlife corridor creation. The loss of koala trees has been massive as a result of development under a Town Plan that has no requirement to protect the koala in urban areas. The Birkdale Progress Assn has always maintained that development in the suburbs such as ours could have proceeded along with provision for koalas. This is a "have your cake and eat it too" approach. It remains a goal of the Assn to have the urban koala recognised through inclusion on the State Koala Map and hence afforded adequate protection. **A national strategy that comprehensively protects the koala is urgently needed and this must be the listing of the koala as critically endangered under the EPBC Act.**

While there is an increasing awareness at state and local government level of the plight of the koala, particularly from Redland City Council, largely elected on a green and koala platform, nevertheless there are extremely worrying aspects to development in the urban areas such as ours.

1. Population push from State Government to "in fill" is creating catastrophic results in our bush suburbs: the community is now down to trying to save individual trees, monitoring protection of tree root zones, checking construction fences do not bottle up feeding and breeding koalas, lobbying to get corridors connected, monitoring actions of unsympathetic arborists and landscape managers as well as trying to convince residents and neighbours to fence and plant to allow koala movement.

2. This same "in fill" that allows blocks to be split, trees to be removed etc is protected in Queensland by planning and the state's injurious affection laws. There is no requirement beyond koala zoned areas that koala values carry any weight. As extra people, dogs, cars are crammed in, the koala's roaming area decreases.

Koalas have always roamed and fed and bred in the vegetated creek and coastal corridors in Redlands, especially in the catchments of Coolywynpin, Tarradarrapin, Hilliards and Eprapah Creeks. There seems to have been a reluctance, in the main, for this to be recognised, probably because that it where development has been aimed. However, over 25% of Redland koalas live in these urban areas. We believe the urban koala must be recognised. These urban koalas intermingle with the whole and are vital to the survival of the whole. (Stated by the then EPA at Redland Koala Summit November 2007)



Alexandra Hills 16 lot development 2009: koala overlay provided no protection even though koala zone next door. Swimming pool, dogs, cars replace trees.



Koala in Birkdale Bush, Birkdale. Not recognised in state mapping.

The following was written in 2009 and is still relevant today.

KOALAS CANNOT WAIT UNTIL 2010 FOR A REVIEW !!

1. This is a koala photographed in a well known koala area/corridor on Old Cleveland Rd East, Birkdale. (September 2006) He is one of the 53% remaining in urban areas. Over the last seven years, 47 per hundred have been lost. But he is not recognised on the State Koala Map.



2. In October 2006, he was recognised by a sign a few metres away to mark a hot spot where statistics show many koalas have been killed by cars. But still he has no other status except vulnerable.



3. 200 metres behind him lies a Koala Conservation Area, recognised by Redland Shire Council and included on the State Koala Map.



4. But because the koala has moved from this area to travel and rest in his corridor, he does not know that he has no status.



5. No further land in the area is recognised as urban koala land unless he makes it down the road to the land fill area, Judy Holt Park on Old Cleveland Rd East, Birkdale.

Here is a picture of some of the corridor he uses. It is in the background.



6 .Here is the rest of the corridor his trees can connect to. Much of it is already in

Council ownership and some is land for wildlife.



7. Help me please before I become extinct. Request that the Redland Shire

Council Bushland Habitat Overlays and Koala Overlays become part of the State Koala Map. Then my corridors might be safe and I might dodge the cars and dogs



Thank you.

I don't know it, but I am the fourth most well recognised tourist icon in the world and me and my mates bring in \$1.1billion tourism dollars a year , and that was back in 1996.

Submitted by Birkdale Progress Association Inc to the Qld Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism; Member for Capalaba, Hon Michael Choi; Member for Cleveland Hon Phil Weightman; Premier of Qld, Hon Peter Beattie; Councillors of Redland Shire Council; Nick Heath, Policy Advisor to Minister; EPA; Editor Bayside Bulletin; Editor Courier Mail; Editor The Australian; and others.

In conclusion, the Birkdale Progress Association Inc believes that the decision by

the Committee to list or not list the koala as critically endangered must give due weight to the lack of political commitment by local and state government over the last two decades to address the matter with conviction. Should the Committee for scientific reasons decide not to list this iconic animal, then we believe it must provide a blue print with teeth that ensures the koala does not slip further down the slide to extinction.

We believe certain political actions are necessary:

1. Acknowledge importance of urban koalas in the survival of the whole. (25+%)
2. Immediately include urban koalas in the mapping to enable benefits of koala strategies to flow through. Many, such as Tarradarrapin Wetlands, are already conservation areas but unacknowledged as koala areas. Birkdale Bushland has no koala status.
3. Utilise local knowledge of groups and individual carers to feed directly and immediately into mapping for urban koalas. Complements Redland Council wildlife mapping.
4. Utilise conservation areas currently unlisted on Koala maps, identify connecting corridors for mapping and show sites in urban areas that can provide offset planting opportunities to assist survival of urban koala.
5. Ensure urban koalas are adequately included in the regulatory provisions so as to turn around their declining numbers.
6. Have adequate regulatory protection for urban koalas in place before in-fill overtakes and removes suburban euclalypts.

Prepared by Genevieve Gall
Birkdale Progress Association Inc