

As one of many friends of the koala, I am very pleased to know that greater efforts are being put forward by the NSW Government to adopt a whole-of-government koala strategy, including both state and local government authorities. Much good conservation work has been done to date by many different groups and individuals, but it seems that overall this work has not been enough to halt the rapid decline of our koala populations across the state of NSW (and QLD). The time for positive action is none too soon.

I am submitting these comments at the very last opportunity before the submission process closes as I was unaware of the public call for submissions until quite recently. Unfortunately I was also unaware of the community information session in my home town however I was able to view the on-line session. It was very informative and well presented. My comments below are being made with the admission that I have not read all the on-line documents and FAQs, so I apologise in advance if I make comment on a matter that has been addressed in any of these available documents. My comments are fairly specific and relate to my personal knowledge and understanding of koala conservation in my local area.

Local Council Koala Plans of Management

For the 25 years that I have lived in Port Macquarie, a town with a significant urban koala population, our local council has not provided a Koala Plan of Management despite its requirement to do so. This is disappointing but I do believe that the current council is working on such a document. I do wonder why it takes so long to develop such an important document to guide the actions of various stakeholders in ensuring koala conservation, when other local councils have been able to do just that. Timely development and implementation of local koala management plans is imperative to the recovery of our local koalas.

Better Local Actions through Better Communication

Better communication between local authorities will lead to better outcomes. For example, where koala recovery organisations require leaf for koalas in care, local vegetation management authorities should communicate with care groups when leaf may become available, rather than leaving it on the ground.

As part of their environmental studies, school children should be educated on the protection of threatened species, including koalas. Local care & environmental groups could be involved in this education program.

Koala Population Mapping

Over the years, I have happily reported koala sightings, mostly by email to the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital and also via the Koala Tracker on-line portal. The only time I have contributed to the NSW Atlas database was when I participated in the annual koala counts via the NatureMapr app. As a general comment, entering sighting data in the NSW Atlas database was not particularly easy.

I am in full agreement with the Chief Scientist's recommendation to have ONE database that koala population and sightings data can be entered by anyone that wants to make a contribution. A mobile device app would be an excellent way to receive this contribution from the broader community.

Community Involvement

I strongly support the action to 'use multiple channels to engage the community in koala conservation and recovery across the state'. The more local communities are aware of where our koala populations are located and what positive actions they can take to conserve these populations, the better the conservation outcome.

Other areas where I have some dot point comments include:

Education

- Publish all statistics, including accidents, deaths, releases etc.
- Publish known habitats in town and especially driver 'black spots'
- Publish 'live' koala demographics on the internet
- News items in local papers, especially in breeding season
- Flyers in tourist accommodation
- Posters
- Publish accident sites (e.g. where Squeaky was found and his mother was killed in Aug 2012)
- Erect signs at each 'koala' town entrance with wording such as 'Watch out for our wildlife' or 'We share our town with koalas and other wildlife' etc.

Road Safety

- Signs painted on or applied to road surfaces e.g. 'koala zone'
- Special signs where major koala habitat located
- Markers on prominent koala trees such as 'Koala Food Tree'
- Luminescent markings on road signs to improve night safety for koala road crossing activity
- Additional signage during peak koala activity i.e. breeding season

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. I look forward to following the progress of the NSW Koala Strategy and its implementation throughout the state.

Best regards,
Julie

Julie Pleace