

Submission to Koala Management Strategy

Our Background

We are volunteer workers at Tilligerry Habitat having worked there for the last two years. Tilligerry Habitat is the only place where tourists visiting Port Stephens have any chance at all to see a koala in the wild. We search for, and direct visitors to koalas in and around the reserve, we map the movements of koalas when they are sighted, contribute to the NSW database of koala sightings, and maintain a social media presence for Tilligerry Habitat with bi-weekly postings on Facebook, Youtube and the dedicated Tilligerry Habitat web-site.

Threats to Koalas in the local area

Tree Felling

Over the last two years in the immediate vicinity of our house in Lemon Tree Passage we have personally witnessed dozens of trees felled that are on known koala routes and in which we have seen koalas situated. Good habitat trees in good health are being chopped down by residents as a direct result of the poor tree management policy of Port Stephens Council.

We asked Port Stephens Council what the policy is for the felling of trees. They responded via email that the policy is any tree within 5 meters of a DA approved structure (which includes garages and sheds) can be felled.

In response to this we walked around our house in Lemon Tree Passage and did a back of the envelope calculation on what percentage of trees could be felled where we live. The quick observation amounted to approximately 85% of the trees able to be removed.

Please tell us how this policy translates in any way, shape or form into a koala management strategy.

There are many things that are difficult to fight against in the battle to maintain koala numbers. However, stopping the felling of mature trees without good reason is something that can and should be done. All that is needed is the desire by local politicians to protect our environment. The talk of "Koala Corridors" is fanciful in the light of this consistent and systematic destruction.

Dogs

Dog attacks are a frequent threat to the koala population. A dog not on a leash was responsible for the death of a koala here only last month. Fines for dogs off leash in public need to be enforced. There are plenty of designated off leash areas on the peninsula but we frequently see dogs being walked off the lead in koala corridors.

We follow a facebook group called Tilligerry News and Views and there are posts on this site every day about sightings of loose dogs and even dog attacks. Some of these are repeat offenders but no action appears to be taken.

Motor vehicles

Koalas die regularly on our roads. The number of deaths are getting fewer and fewer each year (18 this year) this is for one reason only; there are fewer koalas to knock down. Anna Bay and One Mile Beach used to be a stop-off for tourist buses to spot a koala. No more. There are none to be seen. Lowering speed limits and koala fencing on our main roads will lessen deaths.

Traffic calming measures in residential areas will not only lessen deaths there too, but will also stop the racetrack style behaviour of irresponsible visitors and residents alike.

Ian Rabbitt & Beverly Rabbitt