

1 March 2017

Koala Strategy Submission  
PO Box A290  
Sydney South NSW 1232

## **SUBMISSION: DEVELOPMENT OF A NSW KOALA STRATEGY**

The Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils represents the Lismore, Tweed, Kyogle, Richmond Valley, Ballina and Byron Local Government areas (LGA). This submission reflects the broad views of the NOROC councils for consideration in the development of a NSW Koala Strategy.

The Northern Rivers region of NSW has significant populations of koalas, with the population in the south of the Ballina Shire regarded as nationally significant. For many years Northern Rivers councils have been aware of the ecological importance of koalas and our communities have high expectations that councils are committed to ensuring the long-term survival of the marsupials.

Whilst NOROC notes the recommendations of the Chief Scientist's review into the decline of koala populations in key areas of NSW, the causes of decline have been known and documented for many years. Councils in northern NSW have committed significant resources to ensure the long-term survival of koalas and they have identified this as a priority which is factored into planning processes and decisions. Councils report there is sometimes a disconnect between the decisions and policy interpretations of NSW Government agencies and departments and the position of councils. A NSW Koala Strategy should apply equally to all government departments and entities.

The Chief Scientist's recommendations call for improved data and mapping as a way of stabilising and increasing koala numbers. NOROC councils already have significant up-to-date information about koalas in Northern NSW that is available to the NSW Government and its agencies.

Northern Rivers councils have invested in and developed a range of comprehensive Koala Plans of Management and associated strategies that contain a wide range of information including estimates of koala numbers, the distribution of koalas across the LGAs and changes in the size of koala populations in recent years which inform predictions of future numbers and causes of koala mortality.

The Tweed and Byron Shires have also worked together on the Tweed Byron Koala Connections project. This \$3.5 million project ran from November 2013 to June 2016 with the Federal Government contributing \$2 million from the Clean Energy Future Biodiversity Fund. The aim of the project was to address threats and improve the future of koalas on the north coast with particular emphasis on increasing the area, quality and connectivity of koala habitat in the Tweed and Byron shires.

This resulted in the planting of 73,000 koala food trees and other trees and shrubs to improve koala habitat and enhance the diversity of endangered ecological communities.

**NOROC**

A regional voice for the Tweed, Ballina, Lismore, Kyogle, Richmond Valley and Byron Councils

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In total more than 55 hectares of new koala habitat was created over more than 100 sites.

Councils work closely with the Friends of the Koala (FoK) group, which is recognised as one of the nation's peak koala conservation organisations. Councils have worked with FoK on a number of initiatives including the development of a regional communication strategy to increase the community's understanding and capacity in relation to koala conservation.

There is a current study, funded by the Australian Research Council and led by the University of Queensland, that aims to develop an integrated socio-ecological approach for connecting landscapes and communities for the recovery of threatened koala populations across the Lismore, Byron, Ballina and Tweed shires to inform the priority of ongoing works. This study also involves Southern Cross University.

Despite the work undertaken by Northern Rivers Councils to protect the region's koala populations the decline in numbers continue. A NSW Koala Strategy needs to ensure there is coordinated action across all levels of Government, and this should be reflected in legislation and agency standards. Importantly it should take into account the information, decisions and concerns of local councils with respect to development, land clearing and private native forestry and provide an effective framework that incorporates regional variation in relation to threats, priority recovery actions and adaptive management.

Yours faithfully



Ann Lewis  
Executive Officer