

We The People
Program 198
We the People Blinky Bill the Koala



Good day to you. In 1933 Brooke Nichols wrote the book, "Jacko the Broadcasting Kookaburra". That book featured a children's fictional character called Blinky Bill the koala and later writer Dorothy Wall wrote *The Complete Adventures of Blinky Bill*, beautifully illustrated and featuring the anthropomorphic Koala. Most Australians of any worth will know about Australia's favourite Koala and the books have never been out of print, such is their captivating bush call to us. The stories have been adapted for television and the cinema and even the light atop the Harbour Bridge is called Blinky Bill and I like that.

Now just last week the new mascot for the Commonwealth games to be held on the Gold Coast, was launched and it's a Koala called Borobi which is the Aboriginal rendition. Again the anthropomorphic Koala has been turned into a blue cartoon character with a red nose, zined ears and yellow shorts. I think it's cute but very promotionally oriented as you might expect. Apparently it's a surfing Koala.

Now there is a very serious side to all this which must not be ignored. The Koala is unique to Australia and has fallen in number from 8 million to just 40,000 and all are located on the coastal fringe of eastern and southern Australia where mankind wants to live. This is an arid continent and our arable land and dry forests are incredibly valuable and support humans and our precious native wild life. It appears there isn't room for both anymore as the Koala hurtles toward extinction. Koala's now exists in isolated pockets and whenever they come into contact with man they die from disease, stress, cars and dogs. Our next generation may only know the Koala from the Blinky Bill books or Borobi the surfing Koala and that would be a national disgrace and moral infamy. A colleague of mine, Peter Steele, a retired lawyer, has now given his entire life over to helping the Koala and he is one of a kind in his determination and sincerity. I asked why he was doing this and his succinct answer was *"I have led a selfish life and I want to put back now and I have chosen the Koala as my focus"*. Peter has a unique plan that all levels of government would do well to pursue in successfully relocating Koalas to reserves or suitable bushland. He has established a method of transferring them to safe permanent wildlife sanctuaries away from those locations at the interface with humans as the only way to conserve them and prevent their extinction which is now imminent in SEQ.

Peter Steele's legacy will be the World Wildlife Sanctuaries he is establishing, initially for Koalas but he envisions around the world using a practical template to rescue so much wild life and native vegetation in peril. His first site is located just over the border near Kyogle and is 400 acres of bush suitable for Koalas and appropriately bordered by Booroobee creek. I am privy to his grand plan to fund this but I can't reveal that at the moment except to say he will receive worldwide recognition and listeners will receive news on his progress from time to time well ahead of other media. This Koala Crusader is one of just a few doing anything of worth for the iconic real life Blinky Bill. I encourage you to visit his new web site called World Wildlife Sanctuaries and find out more for yourself and maybe how you might help. In the meantime I have resurrected my own so called 'Teddy' from when I was just 5 so this old childhood Koala of mine is over 60 years old and I still like to hug him. Maybe I'm just a kid at heart.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley

