

We The People
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We the People **The Senior Sailor**



Good day to you. I have wonderful story to tell you. A story of selfless courage, hope and dedication from a real Australian here on the Gold Coast who has dedicated the rest of his life to helping the rapidly diminishing Koala's of Australia. The nations Koala population has plummeted from around 8 million to just 40,000 fragmented vulnerable souls and soon the Koala will be extinct in south east Queensland much to our national shame. Indeed, we Queenslanders are about to lose the most important environmental State of Origin of our life time.

I first saw Peter Steele in Woolworths some years ago raising funds to help save the Koala. The day came when I introduced myself and asked him what it was all about. He explained the disastrous plight of the Koala and that his life was now devoted to setting up a system of nature reserves under the umbrella of **World Wildlife Sanctuaries**. He told me with great pride he had secured his genesis sanctuary of 400 acres near Kyogle in northern NSW. Peter and an environmental scientist are developing a program to successfully relocate Koalas, whereas at the moment most perish because of shock, not that GC City Council or Tweed Council or their developer entourage will admit to that. This problem of seriously threatened species is right across the world so Peter Steele sees his legacy as establishing enduring reserves in perpetuity that can never be sold or fall back into government hands. However his initial focus is on the Koala.

Now as we all know not much happens without money and Peter realised fund raising at one Woolworths store wasn't going to cut it, so he created two very clever campaigns to raise the significant sums needed. The first unique promotion is called the **March of the Trees** and I will explain that to listeners a little further down the track. The second is astonishing in that Peter has locked in a major international sponsor for his **solo round the world sail** on a small yacht. This event will commence in October 2017 and finish as the Commonwealth Games begin in 2018. If successful he will break the world record to sail solo, non-stop and unassisted around the world because you see **Peter Steele is 80 years young**. That's right, this octogenarian is that serious about saving Koalas while the current record holder is a mere youngster at 77. Now if you are saying he's nuts, in one sense your right but what a magnificent madness. There are a lot of moving parts to be considered and just about anything can go wrong but he is sensibly planning for every contingency. I admire his pragmatism in that when I asked if he were to perish while sailing, his retort was "**so what, at 80 my days are numbered anyway**".

Peter sets sail on a journey of 41,855 kilometres from the Gold Coast, south around New Zealand and Cape Horn, north across the Equator to round the Cape Verde Islands then south to Cape Aghulas in South Africa then past Cape Leeuwin Tasmania and return to the Gold Coast. It will take about 7 months and he is forbidden to use the engine to drive the yacht or receive help from anyone. He will have satellite communication but in most cases no hope of rescue if it all goes adrift. Supplies on board of food and water must last the full journey but he can collect rain water. The perils are significant for a young man or woman but when you've seen 80 Christmases pass it's a very big challenge indeed and all for the Koala. How I wish all we Australians had that level of dedication and drive in politics and that level of determination in society. I applaud his efforts and goals.

Peter has promised to speak with us as his magnificent obsession unfolds and that includes while at sea. Now one last thing in that Peter is secretly taking one passenger and that's my own 65 year old toy Teddy which I had as a child of just three. My much loved Teddy is a little furry Koala and it seems fitting to have him along as a companion mascot and I'm delighted to let him travel. What a terrific story and what a great adventure so stay tuned as the lone senior sailor sets sail on the journey of a life time to help save this nations precious Koala. The solitary senior sailor indeed.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley