

We The People
Program 26
Koalas



Now, If I told you that millions of our Koalas had just been shot and skinned the nation would be horrified and outraged at this murderous marsupial genocide. Well that's precisely what has just happened in relative terms. The koala has been around for about 15 million years and flourished until the 1920's when dim-witted Australians very nearly shot them out of existence. In fact in South Australia they were virtually extinct because of the slaughter. Today the Koala populations have plummeted and they are in real danger of complete extinction in SEQ by 2020. The reason for this is habit loss and geographic isolation thus making the gene pool too small as well as other immediate threats including cars, dogs and environmental stress. Have you noticed just how many species on land, in the air and the water are under threat and it's because of mankind and our arrogance and greed. Australia has a disastrous record of extinctions set to worsen in the next decade with the Koala right in our myopic sights.

It appears humans and especially Australian's are born with a special kind of stupid as we have judged forests and wild life to be unnecessary and not worthy of existence. Since Federation we have lost 80% of the nations eucalypt forests. For the few wonderful people out there trying to save our bush and wild creatures it's largely fruitless unless we back their efforts in a meaningful way. Koalas on the Gold Coast and SEQ are especially vulnerable because the Council and State government have utterly ineffective plans for the koala's salvation. What GCCC does in particular is nothing more than an unscientific feel good gesture by spending a few dollars here and there and while Labor and the LNP has promised a few million it's all chicken feed for the Koala as their plight is so great. I doubt Bob Katter cares either as his rifle mentality is alarming and he wont care that at Commera 200 Koalas have to share a little woodland with 70,000 people.

Koalas need a large habitat and a clean safe environment free from people. The forest they occupy needs special home food trees as they are territorial and because the Koala sleeps up to 18 hours a day they are very vulnerable indeed. All that sleep is so they can digest a diet of preferred eucalypt leaves which are toxic to most animals and their nocturnal habit helps reduce energy loss in general. I ask you, what kind of fool would cause the death of a sleeping Koala and what kind of Australian would allow it to happen. This is precisely what the Koala is up against and especially in SEQ and the Gold Coast in particular. In fact in SEQ alone the total Koala population is collapsing at an unprecedented rate of up to 70% in the last three years.

The decision to list the koala as vulnerable in South East Queensland in 2004 was a direct response to significant threats and a perceived decline in koala numbers in the region. However nothing has changed as nothing of substance has been done. In the whole of the Australian continent where once there were millions, there are now at best only 80,000 animals. These remaining koalas are extremely vulnerable for an array of reasons and unless 'we the people' act right now your grand children will never see them alive. Gone the way of the Tasmanian Tiger and the Tasmanian Devil and so many other wonderful creatures. These are the inconvenient scientific facts and the future of the Koala looks grim indeed. You can help by writing to the Federal Minister for the Environment Tony Burke or calling the Australian Koala Foundation in Brisbane or contact Gecko which is the Gold Coast's primary environmental organisation based at Currumbin. When you vote at the upcoming State and local elections, vote for a candidate who has a real passion for the Koala and will effectively preserve our eco systems because without them we are diminished. Forget about the 250 million dollar GC cultural centre mayoral aspirant Tom Tate wants because without the Koala we don't have the right to claim an Australian culture at all.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley