

To the Committee Secretary,

State Development, Natural Resources and Agriculture Committee

We are concerned with Developers coming in to the Widgee area and clearing land of most of the Koala feed trees in Widgee. It happened about two years ago, the developer bought fifty acres of land, cleared the land, then put up the proposed development sign two days later. Those large Blue Gums and Gum Topped Box eucalypts were in a Koala Corridor opposite the Widgee State School. The Koalas moved between the trees in and around the School and went to the trees in the fifty acres that was cleared. Unfortunately the area has been declared residential by our local Council, when it used to be Rural. It is also in a White Zone, which means that the owner can take as many trees out as he wants without permission from the relevant department. Our question is would it be possible to have the lands that are Koala corridors in the Widgee area, changed to Green or Red zones? Shouldn't the owner, seeing that it is in a residential area, have to apply to have the trees removed? We made enquiries when we noticed the trees being removed, and we were told that because it was in a white zone, he didn't need approval, but, he should have had a spotter, which he didn't have at the time. Most of Widgee is a rural area, and always has been since I have lived here for thirty five years. It has been called a "Hot Spot" for Koalas by people in the Koala Action Group in Gympie, of which I was a founding member, before I became the co-ordinator of our own Widgee Koala Action Group. Widgee has a population of around seven hundred people, and because it is only a relatively small population, it isn't called a town, just a very rural, quiet area, and as such, we would like it to remain this way, that is why we came to the area, we wanted the lifestyle. We are very concerned with the welfare of our Koala population, as well as the other wildlife in the area, such as the Mary River Cod, Mary River Turtle, the Playpus and the other wildlife living around and in the creeks in the area. If the developer has his way, the land bordering the Little Widgee Creek, will be developed, which means that all this wildlife may be threatened. We are worried about the welfare of the Koala in particular, as there have been quite a few in our area that have been injured by dog attacks, car stike and illness such as the Retro Virus, Clamidia, and Leukemia, which are life threatening, and can all be brought about by stress, and the removal of their food trees can cause this, according to a veterinary surgeon who works with Koalas in particular. Is it the Federal Government that can change the laws concerning the re-zoning of land? If so, would you or your representative, consider visiting our area and having a look for yourself with a view of re-zoning if possible?

Yours faithfully, Kath O'Donnell

Co-ordinator,

Widgee Koala Action Group.