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To: State Development, Natural Resources & Agricultural Industry Development Committee and all committee members.

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President  
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**Proposal to reinstate the tree clearing laws in Queensland to protect the remaining habitat of the koala, as a sentinel species for all wildlife, and to set aside land for rehabilitation and future protection of this diminishing species.**

As a wildlife Rescuer and Rehabilitator, I have been specialising in the care and rehabilitation of the koala for some 17 years. As president and founder of Return to the Wild Inc. I have authority from the organisation to put this proposal forward to protect the koala, and other wildlife and their habitat.

**VULNERABLE KOALA FACING EXTINCTION DUE TO HABITAT LOSS.**

Previous government regulations protecting this habitat has been revoked and subsequent Governments have followed on this trend. Since this change in regulation mass clearing has occurred, and even small scale clearing by local councils is having a devastating effect on this very unique animal. Number of fatalities and casualties have increased dramatically and unless present laws are changed immediately Australia going to lose this valuable icon.

- The koala brings millions of dollars to Australia from tourism, if we lose this species it is a huge economic loss and will bring SHAME to Australia from worldwide condemnation. Australia already has one of the highest extinction rates of wildlife in the world.
- **THIS IS A SENTINAL ANIMAL FOR ALL OTHER FOREST SPECIES, BOTH FAUNA AND FLORA, LOSE THE KOALA, AND WE ARE GOING TO LOSE MANY OTHER SPECIES IN THEIR HABITAT**
- Loss of habitat is the source reason why the koala is declining and is being pushed to the brink of extinction
- **We are losing the battle of the koala's very survival, unless we change the present laws immediately.**

**WE CANNOT PROTECT THE KOALA UNLESS WE PROTECT IT'S HABITAT!**

**This species will not adapt and evolve to live without the eucalyptus as a food and shelter source.**

- Climate change is a fact and the recent heatwave has had a devastating effect on all species, we have yet to see what damage this is doing to the trees and other flora, these are the very **life blood** for the arboreal species. The present heat wave has seen unprecedented numbers of koalas needing rescues, many of these have either died or had to be euthanised due to the severity of their condition

**HABITAT LOSS can be linked to every problem the koala is facing, this species is under severe stress.**

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- Even small scale clearing from local councils which may seem insignificant to the uninitiated is having a devastating effect on the local koala populations. We rescue many koalas trying to disperse after these tree clearings, and these koalas succumb when crossing roads on foot get hit by vehicles, attacked by dogs, and in rural areas are frequently tossed and trampled by curious cattle and even horses, (this is a common occurrence witnessed by the farmer and the koala rescuer, but most people are unaware of).

1. **STOP THE HABITAT CLEARING IMMEDIATELY!** If we do not protect the habitat of this one species we will lose a valuable Australian Icon, and bring worldwide condemnation to Australia. **Even if only for an economic reason we need to protect the very habitat this species relies on for survival.**

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Only a small percentage of koalas ever return to the wild, many having to be euthanased. Rescues needing veterinary care are sent to one of the wildlife hospitals either in Brisbane, The Gold Coast or the Sunshine coast.

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These are just a few of the rescues we attend at Return to the Wild Inc, photos by Clare Gover

This typical road kill koala.



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**Typical road kill victims taken to Wildlife hospital, this koala had to be euthanased.**



**This is a typical scenario of a koala having been tossed by cattle when crossing a paddock this koala had to be euthanased due to severity of its injuries. This situation is due to habitat fragmentation, the koala having to cross paddocks to get from one tree to another and is attacked by curious cattle.**



This koala was humanely euthanised by a vet after being tossed and bitten by cattle when crossing the paddock, its internal injuries too severe to be saved. As can be seen, it is covered in saliva from the cattle. This is a common occurrence. The problem being the koala is spending more time on the ground as its habitat is so fragmented, and it cannot safely cross from one tree to another.



This mother was crossing a paddock with her joey on her back when two horses kicked and trampled her, broken limbs on both animals. Intervention including surgery and a long-term stint in hospital meant they were able to be rehabilitated. Due to present laws they had to be sent back to the area they came from.



**Burn victims, mother and joey**



**Small scale tree clearing on what was previously protected 'remnant forest' now under development application, and a koala was rescued after being displaced from this section.**



**Koala rescues in urban areas due to loss of habitat by small scale clearing. (Highfields, near Toowoomba)**



**Dangers facing koalas when trying to cross from one fragmented treed area to another 'pocket'. This koala was attacked by dogs, a typical situation.**

**All due to HABITAT FRAGMENTATION.**



**Development on the Darling Downs left this koala unable to find trees. All trees had been destroyed**



*Proposed by Clare Gover*

*President*

*Return to the Wild inc.*



*Photos by C Gover.*