



A voice
for koalas
in the Redlands

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KAG Newsletter

Oct-Dec 2020

Will The Environment Survive Covid?

Covid may have damaged our economy but it must not be allowed to destroy our environment. The mantra will be Jobs, Jobs, Jobs, but the answer cannot not lie in fast tracking inappropriate developments. All levels of government need to hold their nerve against pressure from developers taking advantage of the current economic and employment situation.

Recently The Guardian newspaper, while investigating the murky dealings of Toondah Harbour, reported that the then federal environment minister Josh Frydenberg attempted to persuade the then Queensland environment minister to vary a Ramsar Wetland boundary to suit the Walker Corporation development. The Queensland government held its nerve and the current Queensland environment minister has confirmed the Ramsar boundary will not change.

However the threat of the Toondah PDA remains as Frydenberg, ignoring the advice of his own department, moved the development application to the next stage, an Environmental Impact Statement. This process takes place under The EPBC Act which itself was recently independently reviewed and labelled *"The EPBC Act is ineffective. It does not enable the Commonwealth to play its role in protecting and conserving environmental matters that are important for the nation. It is not fit to address current or future environmental challenges."*

So how much confidence can we have in our political system especially when, as the ABC reported on Background Briefing, *"In the same financial year the development was sent to the Federal Government for approval, Walker Corporation donated \$225,000 to the federal Liberal Party and \$23,000 to Queensland Labor."*

Toondah orphan 'Grace'

On November 30, residents living in Wharf St found a koala joey clinging to a street sign on the corner of Middle and Wharf Streets.

Rescued by Redlands Wildlife Ambulance, the female joey was named 'Grace' and promptly transported to Australia Zoo Wildlife hospital for a vet check. Fortunately she was found to be healthy and approximately 9-10 months old.

It is still unclear how Grace became separated from her mum, who despite extensive searching of the local area by a team of volunteers could not be located.

Several locals spoke about a couple of koalas sighted regularly in the Redland Water grounds and KAG suspects that her mum is probably still in the area somewhere.

Grace has been passed to a wildlife carer for a couple of months until she's more developed and will be released back nearby to this area.

Please report all koala sightings to <https://koalagroup.asn.au/report-a-koala-sighting/> and if you are concerned about a koala's health or wellbeing call Redlands 24 hour Wildlife Rescue on 3833 4031.



Photo: Deidre deVilliers



**KAG WISHES OUR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS A SAFE
AND HAPPY FESTIVE SEASON**

**We hope to be back to our usual activities in 2021 with tree plantings
starting in April or May**

Further details to be advised via our website and by email

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(Tree Planting Convenor)

Treasurer Tanya Golitschenko

Newsletter Debbie Pointing

Executive Members

Chris Bray

Penny O'Neil

Koala sightings - September to December

Alexandra Hills: Agate Ct, Balmoral St, Glover Dr, Leigh Ct, McDonald Rd, Nanette Ct. **Birkdale:** Byng Rd, Collingwood Rd, Comic Ct, Hailey Dr, Hardy Rd, Lyre Ct, Old Cleveland Rd E, Peacock St, Spoonbill St, Sunnybay Dr, William St. **Capalaba:** Hibbertia Cl, Howlett Rd, Ney Rd, Runnymede Rd. **Cleveland:** Beach St, Carolena St, Channel St, Coburg St E, Erobin St, Fitzroy St, Haggup St, Island St, Janlaw St, Koorringa Av, Long St, Longland St, Middle St, Passage St, Phelan St, Princess St, Queen St, Russell St, Shore St E, Shore St N, Shore St W, Smith St. **Mt Cotton:** Kingfisher Rd, Vineyard Dr. **NSI:** Dickson Way. **Ormiston:** Bainbridge St, Dundas St E, Empire Vista, Gloucester St, Hilliard St, Sturgeon St, Tolson Tce, Wellington St.

Redland Bay: Cleveland Redland Bay Rd, Unwin Rd. **Sheldon:** Avalon Rd. **Thornlands:** Boundary Rd, Bunker Rd, Carmay Cl, Clifford Perske Dr, Fitzroy St, Jeff St, Jicama Ct, Kerder St, Mango Pl, Osprey Dr, Panorama Dr, South St, Woodlands Dr. **Victoria Pt:** Bunker Rd, Point O'Halloran Rd. **Wellington Pt:** Bibury St, Bligh St, Crossley Dr, Fernbourne Rd, Goodall St, Hardy Rd, Heritage Dr, Hilliards Pk Dr, Jacob St, Janelle Ct, Marlborough Rd, Old Cleveland Rd E, Saw Mill Dr, Spurs Dr, Starkey St, Station St, Whepstead Av.

Other LCA's: **BCC:** Capalaba W, Carina Heights, Carindale, Karana Downs, Mansfield, Mackenzie W, Mt Cootha, Mt Gravatt East, Nathan. **GRC:** Widgee. **LCC:** Bahrs Scrub, Beenleigh, Holmview, Logan Reserve. **MBRC:** Burpengary, Burpengary East, Ferny Hills, Kallangur, Morayfield. **NSC:** Cooroy. **SRRC:** Allandale, Canungra, Moogerah, Tambourine.

Primary data sources: <https://biocollect.ala.org.au/project/index/edad0555-32a6-473e-8956-c70cf80329c4>
<https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/observations?d1=2020-09-01&d2=2020-12-16>
[https://biocache.ala.org.au/occurrences/search?q=text:koala&fq=c1959:%22Redland%20\(C\)%22&fq=](https://biocache.ala.org.au/occurrences/search?q=text:koala&fq=c1959:%22Redland%20(C)%22&fq=)

Final Koala Conservation Strategy falls short

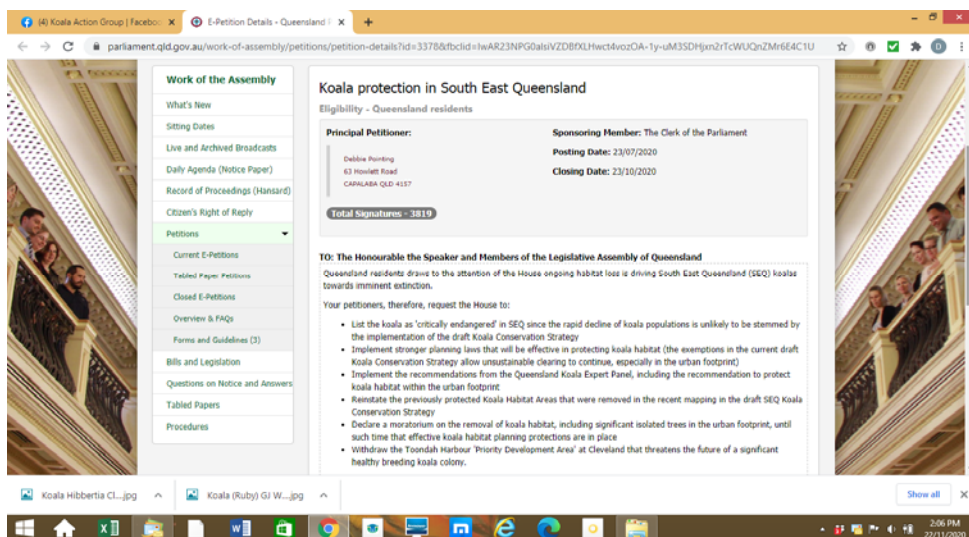
The State Department of Environment and Science released the final South East Qld Koala Conservation Strategy 2020-2025 and disappointingly it is an impotent document that will fail to halt the decline of koalas in Redlands or indeed elsewhere in SEQ.

The strategy abounds with motherhood statements and broad brush ideas that, as in previous policies, contain so many exemptions that 'business as usual' will result and development will continue unabated.

No commitments to the allocation of funding have been made and by the time many of the actions will be implemented the koala conservation strategy will be up for review again.

KAG's e-petition launched in July 2020 asking the State government to give better protection to koalas in SEQ (including withdrawing the Toondah Harbour PDA) resulted in close to 4000 signatures.

KAG understands the petition will be tabled in parliament by the new Environment Minister Hon. Meaghan Scanlon on January 4, 2021. Hopefully then the petition's requests for better koala protection in South East Qld will be actioned.



TREE PLANTING REPORT 2020 by Jenny Niall

The 2020 season has been a little short on planting but there has been plenty of Koala Action at Bligh Street Conservation Area at Wellington Pt. It is rare to walk the site and not see a koala or two and even if I can't spot one I just know they are there!

Such is the enthusiasm of volunteers that we have more turn up to work than we have work for them to do.

Councillor Wendy Boglary has our back and we very much value that. The IndigiScapes team are unfailingly supportive and work on our behalf.

Thank you to our core planters, the site would not be what it is today without you.

Of course Mother Nature is outclassing us all at Bligh St and that is very gratifying.

Here's hoping to a most productive 2021 planting season to come!



One of the Bligh Street locals

**To report a sick or injured koala contact Redlands Wildlife
Rescue Service on 3833 4031**

President Report 2020

Due to COVID-19, KAG's activities this year have been somewhat curtailed, however the planting team has still managed to get nearly two thousand plants in the ground since mid-last year at sites in Birkdale and Wellington Pt. KAG has held information displays at numerous events surrounding Toondah Harbour and conducted regular koala walks.

We have continued to work closely with other community groups to raise awareness of the facts that reveal exactly how huge the Toondah mega-development is. It's astonishing to be even still talking about the proposal considering it was long ago deemed 'clearly unacceptable' by Federal government advisors. Equally disturbing is that this environmentally destructive proposal still has the backing of the Labor State government and some Redland City Councillors.

Like many others in the community, KAG sees the irony of those who proclaim Redland's 'naturally wonderful' branding while simultaneously having complete disregard for what that actually means and how they fail to recognise that environmentally sensitive areas need protection from human encroachment.

Redlands 'Conservation Areas' are increasingly being used for higher impact recreational activities which is of a huge concern particularly when the impacts on these bio-diverse areas are not being measured.

There was an opportunity this year for the State government to implement a Koala Conservation Strategy that could actually make a difference on the back of many excellent recommendations from the Koala Expert Panel. Instead, we've been handed a watered-down plan that is unlikely to stop the decline of koalas in the Redlands or elsewhere in South East Queensland, particularly after such recent bushfire disasters.

The Koala Research team from the University of the Sunshine Coast has been commissioned by Council to continue important research into urban koalas including tracking their movements, monitoring health and breeding status as well as providing community education and engagement activities. KAG is very supportive of this program.

Thank you to the many KAG members and supporters who donate funds to assist the work we do. Donors include some Redlands schools and also members who make the effort to return recyclables to the Container Exchange Scheme.

KAG will continue to focus on the Toondah Harbour proposal which is currently in the Environmental Impact Study stage under the Federal EPBC Act. Considering a recent independent review of the Act labelled it as 'ineffective' and stated 'successive governments had failed to implement the law', we, sadly have little faith in the process.

The future use of the Birkdale Land now owned by Council will be of key interest to KAG. This amazingly interesting area has significant heritage, cultural and environmental values and needs to be secured by utilising the site for the enjoyment of community and tourists whilst keeping true to its unique and valuable assets.

KAG's assessment of the Birkdale Land

KAG has recently written a preliminary assessment report of the Natural Heritage values of the Birkdale Land (formerly known as the Commonwealth Birkdale Land).

Our report highlights the uniqueness of the site and identifies eight specific points of interest that are examples of the diversity of habitats that occur across the land. ([link to KAG report](#))

This 61.78 hectare block of land at Old Cleveland Road East was purchased by Council from the Federal government in April 2019 at a cost of \$4.1 million to Redlands ratepayers.

As part of the conditions of sale, the Federal government entered into a Conservation Agreement with Council that contain clauses specifying requirements for protection and conservation of listed species and threatened ecological communities listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act).

An Ecology Report produced by Cardno that was commissioned by Redlands Council, generally concurs with KAG's ecological assessment of the Birkdale site. ([link to RCC report](#))

The Cardno report, highlights the limitations of their Flora and Fauna inventory due to assessments being undertaken over only three days and not at an optimal time of year (August 2020), therefore they were unable to detect species reliant on flowering plants during Winter and Spring.

The report recommends that more detailed assessments be conducted and are likely to reveal significantly more information regarding the ecological values of the Study Area and information to aid in its management. And further ecological studies should be undertaken that extend for longer than the current investigations and are likely to reveal a greater diversity of wildlife. It suggests the potential for elevation of some areas within the suggested Conservation Area currently not mapped in the regulated vegetation mapping to a remnant status.

Also noted was that vegetation within the Community facilities zone is dominated by open grassland. Ecological values in this area should be addressed when further uses are considered for the area. Ecological assessment of this area would ideally be conducted to inform design of future uses and environmentally sensitive planning. This may include consideration of the importance of individual trees and the role open grassland plays in supporting local populations of macropods.



Research continues in Redlands with the amazing koala detection dogs

KAG has had the pleasure of working alongside these dogs and their handlers from the Sunshine Coast University koala research team.

'Bear', who has been trained to locate koalas and his handler Dr Romane Cristescu (at right) featured in this month's RACQ 'The Road Ahead' magazine. The dogs have been receiving worldwide attention since they assisted with locating injured koalas after the devastating bushfires that occurred late in 2019 and early 2020.

The team of researchers with their koala detection dogs have been commissioned by Redlands Council to conduct ongoing population and genetic studies. A part of the project involves community awareness and involvement in looking out for neighbourhood koalas.

Numbers of koalas are being fitted with GPS tracking collars to gather information on their movement and home range patterns as well as their preference of tree species, breeding and health status.

The research is being conducted in both the urban, peri-urban and larger bushland areas and is confirming the vital importance of maintaining good linkages and corridors across the Redlands.

Councils' **'Wildlife Connections Plan 2018-2028'** identifies where the core habitat and connecting corridors are across the City and aims to provide priority actions for their management, protection and enhancement.

KAG is perplexed by the persistent resistance of some councillors to adopt the Plan with its core objectives to improve corridor habitat, prevent wildlife deaths and reduce developmental impacts.

Considering the Redland City Plan has weakened vegetation protection across the Redlands by allowing as of right tree clearing thresholds without Council approval, it is extremely disappointing and makes a farce of the image being portrayed by the Redlands branding of being 'Naturally Wonderful'.

QUEENSLAND > STORY JESSICA WILSON
PHOTOS UNIVERSITY OF THE SUNSHINE COAST & GETTY IMAGES

TOP DOG

RESCUE DOG SAVES KOALAS INJURED IN BUSHFIRES.



WITH AUSTRALIA'S BUSHFIRE season fast approaching, a team that specialises in finding koalas in fire-ravaged locations is preparing to be deployed.

Last summer, the University of the Sunshine Coast's Detection Dogs for Conservation team searched more than 5000ha of fire-ravaged bushland across eastern

Australia for surviving koalas using heat-seeking drones and a koala detection dog named Bear.

Detection Dogs for Conservation founder Dr Romane Cristescu said her team was prepared for another busy bushfire season.

"While it is unlikely that we will see bushfires to the scale of last year, we are still preparing for multiple fires that can impact many hectares of koala habitat during the next fire season - especially, this year, Queensland has higher than average risk of bushfires," Dr Cristescu said.

"Last year we found koalas struggling with and dying from burns, dehydration and malnutrition weeks after the fires had been contained and we were able to find help for them."

Detection dogs, which are adopted from animal rescue organisations, have been used for several years by ecologists as an accurate and efficient method of gathering data for koala conservation.

"Koala populations have continuously declined for the past 20 years so we needed to be

better and detection dogs were a way to improve finding koala habitats," Dr Cristescu said.

"The detection methods used previously were inefficient and inaccurate... humans were missing 30 percent of sites that the dogs picked up on and we proved detection dogs were the way to improve finding koala habitats."

Dr Cristescu said Bear, an Australian koolie, was specially trained to sniff out injured koalas by the odour of their fur.

"Most of the dogs focus on finding koala scat... but Bear has the hardest job of them all because koalas can be very high in trees," she said.

"Bear takes us as close as possible to the odour and it's our job to spot them high in the tree canopy to rescue."

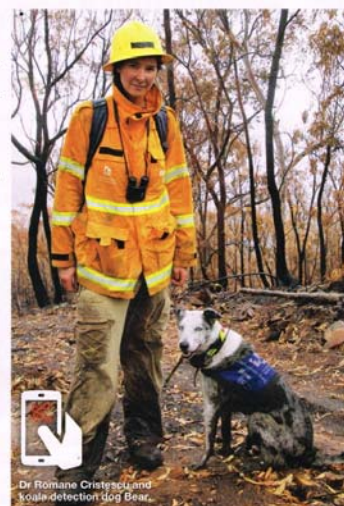
International Fund for Animal Welfare wildlife campaigner Josey Sharad said the detection dog program was critical to koala survival in bushfire zones.

"Bear was our secret weapon during these fires," Ms Sharad said.

"His ability to smell what we can't see was crucial to locating survivors."

"Many of the koalas that were rescued have now been released back into the wild after months of rehabilitation."

"Every one that we can save counts towards the future survival of the species." ■



Dr Romane Cristescu and koala-detection dog Bear.

5000
hectares searched
by Bear last bushfire
season.

30%
of koalas that are
missed by humans are
found by detection dogs.

100+
koalas were found
by Bear last bushfire
season.

100,000
times stronger:
Dogs' sense of
smell vs humans.

50%
decrease in
Queensland's koala
population since 2001.

Source: International Fund for Animal Welfare, University of Sunshine Coast

KAG Membership: Application/Renewal Please complete the following and forward to: KAG: PO Box 660, Capalaba Qld 4157 or email admin@koalagroup.asn.au
Fees can now be made via direct debit to: Koala Action Group Qld Inc. Suncorp Bank BSB: 484-799 Account No. 001748631 and include your name in the ref. line.
Please note: If paying by cheque or money order, ensure the payee line includes the full name - Koala Action Group Qld Inc. (the bank does not accept abbreviations)

Name -----
Address -----
Phone/email -----

Annual membership rates: Single:\$15; Family:\$25; Pensioner:\$10; Under 18:\$10 (Donation:optional) Please specify membership type.

If you're interested in any of the following, please indicate.

Tree planting { } Help with displays { } Letterbox drops { } Wildlife Rescue { }
I apply for membership of the Koala Action Group Qld Inc and enclose my membership fee.

Signature: Date:

All membership renewals are due in June unless otherwise stated on newsletter envelope's address label. Email recipients will receive an email renewal advice.