



Liz Moore

email:
moorejourn@gmail.com



The result 600,000 koalas shot dead in one month.

LIZ MOORE



PROUDLY
SPONSORED BY

**Schultz
Toomey
O'Brien**
LAWYERS

National icon still being abused

PERHAPS we just don't deserve them. They certainly don't deserve us and all that we've done to them.

First, it was government-condoned slaughtering that saw literally millions of koalas shot out of Queensland trees supposedly for the fur trade. Even back then in the 1920s, the public outrage at such an act was so great that the government of the day passed an Act to ensure it wouldn't happen again. But it did.

As Queensland slid into Depression in 1927, the Queensland government in its wisdom – and despite the then Minister for Agriculture and Stock, William Forgan Smith, reiterating that there wouldn't be any further koala killing – declared another open season.

The result – 600,000 koalas shot dead in one month.

Horrific, and made all the worse by the fact that there was no real reason for it (not to mention that each of those 600,000 creatures were incredibly easy, defenceless targets – there is no skill to such slaughter).

University of Queensland's Jacqui Donegan, in her *Unfair Game: Queensland's Open Season on Koalas* in 1927 paper, writes: "Biologists make only passing references to the fur trade as contributing to the marsupial extermination, while various other writers touch on particular motives.

"N.L. Howlett, in the main body of work on the issue, suggests that the 1927 de-



EASY TARGET: A veterinarian treats Fleet, the koala hit seven times with slug gun pellets.

cision was driven by economic disaster and chronic unemployment, while historians Ross Fitzgerald and Harold Thornton cite gross political ineptitude."

The paper goes on to say that "it would appear that the 1927 season, known as the slaughter of the innocents," is still a source of shame in Queensland."

It was also a factor in unseating the government.

Yet, some of us appear to have learnt nothing from the past and think nothing of the future.

The latest case of a koala found with multiple pellets in its little body is the fourth in two years that the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital has had to deal with, and it makes me sick.

As if koalas in southeast Queensland need anything more to contend with. They

are frequently hit by cars, attacked by dogs, and constantly left homeless by a loss of habitat – and we humans are still moronic enough to shoot the few miraculous survivors.

The six-year-old male koala, now called Fleet, sustained seven slug gun pellet wounds, including one in his face. It looks as though he'd been deliberately shot from all angles. Despite all this, he

appears to be recovering well.

Treating vet Amber Gillett expressed her dismay at what had happened: "I am angered and concerned that this is the fourth koala in two years that has been presented to me suffering from gun wounds. I am stunned to see this kind of animal cruelty, and cannot begin to fathom why somebody would want to shoot a koala

People power

YOU can make a difference. Many already have.

It was interesting to note comments made in a recent national Senate Committee Report into koalas. It read: "The committee was surprised by the level of commitment and passion openly displayed by koala advocacy groups and concerned individuals.

"Over 70 of the total 101 submissions received by the committee were from community-based koala conservation organisations and interested individuals."

Perhaps this should also be a reminder to the current Queensland government to listen to the people, unlike their counterparts in 1927.

that poses no threat."

Nor can I, Amber, but then we are educated, intelligent beings and, sadly, the same cannot be said for all of our species.

➔ **Are you doing enough?** Report koala sightings at koaladiaries.com, call 1300 369 652 for all wildlife emergencies, and donate to Fleet's recovery at everydayhero.com.au/event/koala