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Coast on board for koala rescue

Peter Gardiner | 21st February 2012

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IF NOOSA manages to pull together to save its koalas, then a meeting last week in Tewantin could have been pivotal in the outcome.

Koala Diaries co-founder Carolyn Beaton had her urgent call to instigate a koala management plan from Sunshine Coast Council heard, and on Wednesday sat down with Councillor Russell Green and a team of officers from a range of portfolios including planning, environment and works.

Over recent months, Ms Beaton has detailed the steady loss of koalas to car strikes around Eenie Creek Rd as part of a general slide in population numbers that has alarmingly picked up pace in recent years.



The council has agreed to progress a koala management plan for the region.

File

Concerns over the fragmented koala populations now appear to have sparked a rescue mission for the entire Coast population of the Aussie icon.

"I was encouraged by the outcomes of the meeting," Ms Beaton said.

"Council has agreed to progress a koala management plan for the whole of the Sunshine Coast as part of its biodiversity strategy - normally something of this realm would be an ambition for the medium term, but it was acknowledged that the normal time-frame needs to be accelerated.

"Meanwhile, council will address koala black spots, with priority given to the number of issues associated with Eenie Creek Rd that have contributed to koala mortality.

"I hope that in the months and years ahead, we will look back and recognise this as something of a milestone - that it was the period in time when council took decisive action to turn the koala situation around, rather than allowing extinction by neglect."

Cr Green said the council was committed to survival of the region's koalas.

"Our immediate response is to see if we can really improve things - do things, like can we prevent the koalas from being able to access to roads," Cr Green said.

"Then we have to look at the koala population and see how we can manage it.

"How can we improve it and actually develop a full-blown koala management plan, not only for the north region of the Coast but for the Sunshine Coast."

He said one of the main concerns was helping the few healthy and fertile koalas survive to have offspring.

The council action came as the Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke announced a 10-week extension to deciding if the koala should be listed as a nationally threatened species.

Mr Burke has requested further information from the Threatened Species Scientific Committee in relation to the precise boundaries of where koala populations are dwindling.

He said the committee ha found koalas abundant in some areas such as South Australia, but declining in other areas including Queensland.

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