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28 January 2011

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Inquiry into the status, health and sustainability of Australia's koala population

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the *Inquiry into the status, health and sustainability of Australia's koala population*. Please note that this is an officer level submission which has not been considered formally by council.

1. The Sunshine Coast Council local government area is within South East Queensland – the region within Queensland where the highest densities of koala populations occur and where the koala is listed as 'Vulnerable' under the *Queensland Nature Conservation Act (1992)*.

Sunshine Coast Council has developed a *Biodiversity Strategy 2010-2020* which classifies the species as a 'significant fauna species' with the region.

Existing conservation programs and previous studies and programs indicate that there are a number of known koala populations within the Sunshine Coast including along the Blackall Range and west to the Conondale Ranges, as well as the iconic population in Noosa.

One of the greatest threats to koalas on the Sunshine Coast is loss of habitat.

2. The current status (i.e. Vulnerable) of koalas within South East Queensland does not reflect the threats to the species and the population decline within the region. It is recommended that the current status be amended.
3. The legal mechanisms currently in place in Queensland do not adequately provide for the protection of koalas. South East Queensland planning provisions currently focus on habitat types rather than where actual koala populations remain. An immediate and urgent priority should be focussing on identifying viable existing populations and ensuring they are protected.
4. Significant funds need to be allocated to further understand the health of koala populations within South East Queensland and in particular the diseases they are susceptible to.

If you would like any further information relating to this submission please contact me on (07) 5441 8170.

Yours sincerely

Dr Stephen Skull
MANAGER, ENVIRONMENT POLICY