

Submission to Parliamentary Select Committee
Re Koalas in SE NSW.

This is a very brief submission to share my belief/experience that humanity's attempts to care for the environment are only successful where there is co-operation between we humans. Humans who respect humans are essential in the business of conservation. With mutual respect amazing things can be achieved and Chris Allen has been a part of amazing things here in the Bega Valley

The NSW National Parks/DECCW wisely employed Chris Allen to support Koalas in SE NSW. He was a good choice because:

He has quickly become known in the region as the Koala man

He has integrity

He has a capacity to connect with people from all back grounds and is connected with folk all over the place

He has a passion for the forests and the Koalas – this is his vocation – he understands the importance of Koalas as an indicator species for bio-diversity, and the importance for the planet of preserving bio-diversity.

He is a natural net-worker

As soon as he meets anyone (anywhere, anytime) he asks where they live and then about the forests near them

He has respect for people of all persuasions

He has many people's trust including, for example, many in the Koori community and in the scientific community

He works from the heart, and from the head

His passion for the subject makes him a great and entertaining teacher

He can sit down and listen to stories from old people and from children

He is excited to use digital mapping and other relevant technology

He likes to be sure that data is recorded and enjoys preparing reports

He can inform, guide and unleash the potential enthusiasm of community volunteers to spend days in the bush raking under trees in all different terrain looking for Koala poo.

He is not daunted by the enormity of searching under thousands of trees for Koala poo in order to estimate numbers of Koalas

He flexibly prioritises this work in his life

He gives it his all

PTO A short story

A short story

A while ago two young Koori men were riding their bikes in Mumbulla State Forests. They saw a Koala. When one of them got home he told his mother. She decided to tell Chris. He went with her son to the place they had seen the Koala. It was a section of forest where there had been no expectation of seeing Koalas.

Chris arranged for some surveys to be done. He included scientists from the north coast who have been pioneering a survey method, local land holders, other Parks staff, Kooris, local and international volunteers. They found evidence of a viable Koala population – the first such population Chris has been sure of in the Bega Valley.

Chris compiled the data, wrote reports and did all he could to keep the managers of these forests informed. His supervisor invited him to participate in inter-departmental negotiations regarding the management of these forests. Chris worked with Parks staff to plan burns that would support the Koala population rather than jeopardise it.

If the mother of the young Koori man had not known of Chris and trusted him to use the information wisely the land managers would not have known about the Koala population. If the population had not been verified it would have lost its habitat by now. (It had been intended to log and burn this forest last year). The Mumbulla Koala population is still not safe from these practices, but Chris Allen has done his best. The next step is a political one at government level.

Jenny Spinks 7-2-11

Chris' proud, and long suffering (!) wife

BA Social Administration, nurse and midwife qualified in UK, Candelo Bulk Wholefoods (workers) Co-op member, core member of Bega Eco Neighbourhood Developers, a not for profit community association that has successfully made an ecologically and socially sustainable 22 lot subdivision that includes 10 homes for low income tenants.