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Submission to the Australian Senate Inquiry into the Status,
Health and Sustainability of the Koala Population.

I live in the Queensland Regional Council of the Scenic Rim. It was created in 2008 from parts of three former local government areas of Beaudesert, Boonah and Ipswich. The Scenic Rim is an exceedingly beautiful area ringed by mountains that has survived largely unscathed by modern urban developments and the expanding metropolises of Brisbane, Ipswich City, Logan City and the Gold Coast City that are to the north and east.

The region is over 4,000 square kilometres and has many National Parks and other reserves including World Heritage Listed Gondwana Rainforest. There is a widespread healthy koala population that is sadly unrecognised and seldom considered by the Queensland State Government, Scenic Rim Regional Council or developers. In fact when the State Government did koala mapping the Scenic Rim was not included and the koalas ostensibly stopped at the borders with Ipswich and Logan. This would not have been acceptable if the koala was classified as threatened or endangered.

There is a sinister side to this unmapping of the koala that fits in well with the Queensland State Government's new plans for the Scenic Rim that not only put the koala under threat but also the 200 other rare and endangered plants and animals and the National Parks and Gondwana Rainforest.

When the Scenic Rim was formed by the Local Government Reform Commission the rationale given for its formation was in part as follows. This is an extract from the document. The Beaudesert Regional Council was later renamed the Scenic Rim Regional Council.

"The combined area is predominantly designated as "Regional Landscape and Rural Production" areas in the SEQ Regional Plan and together with the rural Harrisville/Peak Crossing area, will provide a surrounding rural area and hinterland to the major population areas contained in the SEQ Regional Plan's Urban Footprint. The amalgamated Regional Council will deliver rural, environmental and natural resource management for the combined area together with common and coordinated forward planning and management of rural development, nature-based recreational economic activities, and rural infrastructure provision."

- Southern Beaudesert and Boonah Shires have a similar economic base focusing on farming and agro-ecotourism which is growing in economic importance. In addition, many of its rural industries are niche including the equine sector (race horse and quarter horse studs).
- The World Heritage-listed scenic rim covering both existing local governments has many areas of natural landscape and scenic value and has significant facilities and opportunities for outdoor and recreational pursuits.
- Boonah Shire has many community of interest links with Harrisville/Peak Crossing, including schools, sporting teams and clubs.
- The combined local government area is relatively compact with very good transport linkages between all towns/communities in the region.'

In the short space of a few years the Scenic Rim has gone from the above expectations and plans to being seen as the new mega-growth area of South East Queensland with little or no consideration being given to the koalas or the region's rich biodiversity.

Planned is the building of a large industrial city called Bromelton, a major inter-modal freight centre with new roads and cargo railways, and the inclusion of all the towns and villages in the new

urban footprint with forced rapid growth of their population to provide labour for Bromelton and soon to be developed coal and petrochemical industries. Virtually the whole region is now under coal and petroleum exploration permits and there are plans for open cut coal mines, coal seam gas (CSG) fields and underground combustion gas (UCG) fields. There is no uncertainty that the coal and gas is present and able to be exploited.

The large City of Bromelton employing over 30,000 people which is planned to locate light, medium, heavy and difficult to locate industries will be less than 30 kilometres from the Gondwana Rainforests and there are plans to construct a coal mine probably open cut immediately adjacent to the Mt Barney section of the Gondwana Rainforests.

New large dams, Wyaralong Dam in the Teviot Valley, and the Bromelton Off Stream Storage have been built to facilitate the growth and development. 745 Hectares of forest taken by the State Government for the Wyaralong Dam is now having a major motor bike riding park built to cater for enthusiasts from all over the state. They expect at least 10,000 riders per year. I understand there is an endangered rock wallaby in the park but that seems to have made no difference.

An environmental disaster has been planned and is starting to unfold in this beautiful region. Koalas are now very much under threat in the Scenic Rim. The Scenic Rim very much needs koalas listed and protected. I think it is time for federal environmental protection legislation to be enacted that can protect whole regions from inappropriate development of the type that is currently being pursued in the Scenic Rim.

Local Governments and State Governments can obviously not be trusted to protect the koala and the environment generally and DEWHA is obviously a toothless tiger when it comes to these large scale acts of regional eco-vandalism.