



NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR



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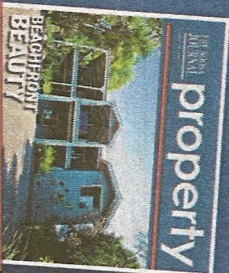
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EXCITEMENT BUILDS FOR DALAL LAMA'S COAST VISIT [Page 081]

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Our icons being wiped out

ISOBEL COLEMAN
colemant@questnewsitd.com.au

If you spot a koala in a tree take a good look. It might be the last one you see.

That was the grim warning from Coast koala expert Carolyn Beaton this week, after revealing there might be no more than 40 left alive in the Noosa Biosphere area.

Shocking new statistics show that Noosa's koala population has fallen by 95 per cent in the past decade, with 34 deaths since the beginning of last year. Five died in May and another, a favourite at Little Cove, had to be euthanased last week due to illness.

Carolyn, co-founder of the Noosa-based koaladaries.com.au, said the situation was now dire. "We are recording the last koalas in Noosa through the web-site," she told *The Journal*. "They will soon disappear altogether unless we take drastic action now."

Carolyn - who was recently



called as an expert witness in a senate inquiry investigating the health, status and sustainability of Australia's koala population - said lack of community interest was not the problem.

"We have experts ready to jump on board, and we have developed a sound recovery and management plan," she said. "What we need is funding."

Carolyn slammed the Bligh Government for not listening to her plea. "Bligh has allocated \$45.5 million for koala protection but we cannot get the \$800,000 we need to activate the plan," she said. "I strongly challenge the assumption... that the Pine Rivers and Redlands koala populations are most at risk."

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WARNING: Koala campaigner Carolyn Beaton. Picture: BEN VOS

Plea for urgent koala funds

➔ **FROM page 1**

CAROLYN said: "I am therefore re-submitting the request for urgent assistance from the State Government to meaningfully address the koala crisis that exists on the Coast – namely, a priority allocation of funding for the 2011-12 financial year from the Koala Response Strategy budget.

"The recent rate of mortality has been such that a refusal of this request will inevitably condemn this once iconic koala population to obliteration," she said.

"This community recognises that, for all its volunteer efforts, the forces working against the survival of koalas in the region are unre-

lenting and can only be meaningfully addressed by a strong, collaborative effort that draws on the resources of the community, government and koala experts, with political considerations put to one side.

"I believe this situation could be turned around but not without a major investment."

Noosa Biosphere chair Michael Donovan supported Carolyn's call.

"The suggested strategy using our local experts is a worthy initiative and would be endorsed by Noosa Biosphere," he said.

"Carolyn has great credibility in this matter and Noosa Biosphere is support-

ive of Koala Diaries' moves to seek funding to preserve the few koalas left in the biosphere. Noosa without koalas would be a tragedy."

Environment Minister Kate Jones told *The Journal*: "The Sunshine Coast is an area where our government is actively working to protect and expand koala habitat. We have declared five separate koala nature refuges in the Coast region over the past 12 months. A new survey of the koala population in the area will also be undertaken by DERM as part of a five-year, \$2.5 million, koala population survey and monitoring program currently under way."

➔ **See Liz Moore on page 14.**