

NSW Department of Planning & Environment
Major Project Assessment
GPO 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Attn: Rebecca Sommer

**MP09_0028 MOD 3 - Amendments to noise limits, request for small community events and administrative amendments
(Project Application) North Byron Parkland Cultural Event Site: Tweed Valley Way and Jones Road, Yelgun - Objection**

I write on behalf of Friends of the Koala, which is the lead koala conservation group in the Northern Rivers region of northern NSW. Our mission, which we have been pursuing since 1986, is conserving koalas in recognition of the contribution the species makes to Australia's biodiversity.

This submission is directed primarily at the proposed amendment to noise levels. It appears that the proponent admits that the existing noise limits are difficult for them to comply with and are unworkable. They argue their noise limits should be as high as the limits at other venues in NSW.

Along with many others in the Northern Rivers community our members sincerely believe that this event site is in the wrong location, adjacent as it is to the Billinudgel Nature Reserve.

Benwell and Scotts (2010) identified the locality as part of a 'critical' climate change corridor linking the Nature Reserve to the World Heritage Rainforests of the Mt Warning caldera. In regard to effects on wildlife they concluded "...essentially we do not know with any certainty what the exact effects of a massive increase in human disturbance (relative to the current situation) will be, but there is a significant risk that survival and fecundity of local populations will be adversely affected, resulting in population declines." (p.5)

Despite scientific evidence of unacceptable environmental impacts, approval was eventually granted. Now as to be expected, the proponent is seeking to increase noise levels as well as allowing other, non-music events on the site even though a five-year trial period applies.

We are aware of the paucity of published information on the impact of noise on koalas, so we asked Dr. Steve Phillips, who has been monitoring the impact of noise at the **Bluesfest** site at nearby Tyagarah and has had a scientific paper recently accepted for publication in *Australian Mammology*. This paper amongst other things, 'discusses the issue of the physiological costs to individual koalas and populations thereof resulting from ongoing but episodic disturbance events and offers a series of recommendations relating to the need to effectively buffer habitat areas known to contain resident koala populations and compensating for habitat'.

Dr Phillips said that he had 'unequivocally documented aversive behaviour by koalas in response to episodic loud noise. The extent of the response depends on how close individual koalas are to the source of the noise. Those within 500m certainly vacated their home range areas, moving away in a direction perpendicular to the source of the noise for periods of up to several days before returning. Other koalas living further away (up to 725m) also exhibited aversive behaviour by moving to the extremes of their respective home range areas, again in a direction that was perpendicular to the source'.

There is a well-documented trend towards fewer animals being present on the Bluesfest site since the inaugural koala monitoring program associated with the 2010 festival.

In conclusion, it is inappropriate to increase noise limits and to change conditions during a trial period. There would need to be conclusive, independent studies carried out supporting lack of impact on wildlife. Increased noise levels, if they were approved would very likely be a negative outcome for the more than 50 threatened species known to be associated with the Billinudgel Nature Reserve. We therefore strongly object to any increase in noise levels or increased use and impact at the North Byron Parkland site.

Thank you for the opportunity to make these comments.

Lorraine Vass
President
22 June 2015
Koala Rescue and Information
6622 1233

PO Box 5034
East Lismore NSW 2480
info@friendsofthekoala.org
www.friendsofthekoala.org

Volunteers conserving koalas and their habitat on the Northern Rivers.

Friends of the Koala services the local government areas of Ballina, Byron, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley & Tweed.

*The Nature Conservation Council of NSW's 2012 Outstanding Member Group and
2014 Marie Byles Award for most outstanding new environmental campaign
Lismore City Council's 2013 Sustainable Environment Award Winner*