



The
**Great Koala
National Park**
Let's make it happen!



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands within the proposed Great Koala National Park and pay respect to the past, present and emerging Elders of the Gumbaynggirr, Dunghutti and Bundjalung Nations.

THE GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

A community proposal

It began with an idea...

Conservationists concerned about dramatically declining koala numbers across northeast NSW recognised that the most urgent priority was to permanently protect as much koala habitat as possible.

In 2012, four environment groups; the Bellingen Environment Centre, Nambucca Valley Conservation Association, Clarence Environment Centre and North Coast Environment Council collaborated with the National Parks Association of NSW (NPA) to engage ecologist David Scotts to map



and assess the status of Koala populations on the Mid North Coast between the Macleay and Richmond Rivers.

The Scotts Report^[1] identified two nationally significant koala populations in the region, one centred around Coffs Harbour-Guy Fawkes and the other in Bellinger-Nambucca-Macleay. These 'metapopulations' were estimated to contain 20% of all wild koalas in NSW. The Great Koala National Park proposal has been designed to maximise the protection of these critically important koala populations.



THE PROPOSAL

The GKNP would protect a total of 315,000 hectares of koala habitat on public lands. 140,000 hectares is already protected as conservation reserves, while the remaining 175,000 hectares are currently classified as State Forest. The State Forests are a critical part of the proposal, containing much of the best koala habitat in the region.

NSW government mapping of koala habitat confirms the GKNP proposal would protect the most important koala habitat in the region.

The GKNP proposal would protect koala habitat in

five local government areas: Clarence Valley, Coffs Harbour City, Bellingen Shire, Nambucca Valley and Kempsey Shire Councils and does not include any plantation forest or private land.

A gateway visitor centre is proposed south of Coffs Harbour on the Pacific Highway adjacent to Bongil Bongil National Park. It will provide visitor information, Gumbaynggirr Cultural information, a café, educational space and a koala hospital. The centre will be the launch point for various park activities including koala spotting tours, Indigenous Cultural tours and trail hiking.



FROM HUNTING TO HABITAT LOSS...

Why we need The Great Koala National Park

Before Europeans arrived, many millions of koalas lived in the forests and bushlands of Eastern Australia. At least 8 million koalas were killed for the fur trade between 1888 and 1927. The impacts of ongoing habitat loss caused koala numbers to further decline with a third of the NSW koala population lost between 1990 and 2010. By 2015 only 87,000 wild koalas were estimated to remain in Australia representing only 1% of those that were shot for the fur trade.^[2]

The repeal of the Native Vegetation Act in 2017 resulted in a threefold increase in land clearing for urban expansion, while agriculture and private logging has caused a rapid loss of core koala habitat in NSW.^[3]

The 2020 NSW parliamentary inquiry into koalas and their habitat^[4] found that without serious intervention, koalas could become extinct in NSW by 2050. Habitat loss is the key threat to the survival of the koala and all experts agree that the key intervention needed is habitat protection. Koalas were listed as a Vulnerable species in NSW, QLD and ACT in 2012, but just 10 years later due to government failure to halt their ongoing decline, they were listed as an Endangered species under the Commonwealth EPBC Act in 2022.



Industrial logging of public native forests has increased in intensity and frequency over decades. Large scale forest clear-felling within 140,000 hectares called an Intensive Harvesting Zone is occurring along the NSW North Coast. 43% of this zone is mapped as high quality koala habitat.^[5] Koalas prefer mature forest and large trees^[6] that are well connected across the landscape.^[7]

As a consequence of habitat loss and fragmentation, koalas are forced to spend more time on the ground and as a result, are extremely vulnerable to dog attacks and vehicle strikes.^[8]

Funding koala hospitals and planting trees, whilst worthwhile, do not address the core problem of habitat loss.

THE 2019/20 BUSHFIRES

After a prolonged drought, the 2019-2020 Black Summer bushfires burnt through massive areas along the East Coast of Australia killing an estimated 3 billion native animals. 10,000 wild koalas were thought to have perished in NSW, reducing their population by a third.^[9]

Along the NSW North Coast, including within the bounds of the proposed GKNP, over half the native forest was burnt with a third being mapped koala habitat. Despite this, the southern section of the proposed GKNP was mostly unburnt and now provides an invaluable forest refuge for native animals, especially wild koalas.



THE GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

It's not just about Koalas!

Koalas would not be the only beneficiaries of the GKNP. Many other threatened and endangered species would also be protected including old growth and hollow dependant species such as yellow-bellied gliders, greater gliders, powerful owls, sooty owls, masked owls, barking owls and glossy black cockatoos. The GKNP area is a recognised biodiversity hotspot and includes outstanding forest ecosystems from coast to hinterland including World Heritage listed Gondwana Rainforests^[10] and other unique tall eucalypt forests, assessed as having World Heritage value but not yet listed.^[11]

Logging forests reduces carbon stores and drives carbon emissions, so protecting native forests within the GKNP would make a positive contribution

to Australia's and NSW's commitments to reducing carbon emissions.



Climate change is a key threat to the koala, as it is expected to lead to increased temperatures, changes to rainfall, increasing frequency and intensity of droughts, and increased fire risk over much of the koala's range.^[12] Koala population dynamics are likely to be negatively impacted by the changes in leaf chemistry induced by elevated CO₂.^[13]

Forest trees play an important role in the water cycle, absorbing rain fall and producing water vapor, while also lessening water pollution by stemming polluted runoff.^[14] Forests provide clean water for consumers, agriculture and the environment while helping regulate the flow of floodwater.^[15]

A concept plan has been created for a world class walking track which explores the exciting potential the GKNP would offer for local recreational activities and domestic and international tourism.

THE LONG DISTANCE WALKING TRAIL is a spectacular 217 kilometre world class multiday walk. Starting from the proposed GKNP Visitor Centre adjacent to the Pacific Highway at Raleigh south of Coffs Harbour. It will travel from the coast up to its highest point at 1,400m ASL on the Dorrigo Escarpment and back down to the sleepy heritage town of Bowraville.

The proposed route, much of which is on existing roads and tracks, is divided into nine sections of varying difficulty and length each ending and beginning at accessible points. A number of sections offer smaller loop tracks to local features such as waterfalls and lookouts.

The Long distance Walking Track will provide exciting recreational options for domestic and international tourists while providing significant direct and indirect tourism business opportunities. The walk will also generate substantial job opportunities in track development and maintenance.

Estimated to take 20 days to complete in its entirety, the walk would offer hikers a range of experiences and challenges. The Track passes through areas rich in Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal cultural heritage. Consultation with Gumbaynggirr Elders, organisations and Knowledge Holders, is ongoing and requires more detailed planning and consultation to ensure that culturally sensitive areas are treated appropriately.



ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF THE GKNP PROPOSAL

An independent economic impact analysis of the GKNP by the University of Newcastle,^[17] jointly commissioned by Coffs Harbour City Council, Bellingen Shire Council and Destination North Coast, concluded that "the proposed GKNP will provide positive economic impacts. These arise from an increase in regional investment and a corresponding increase in tourism in the five LGAs, taking into account a transition away from state forest native logging."

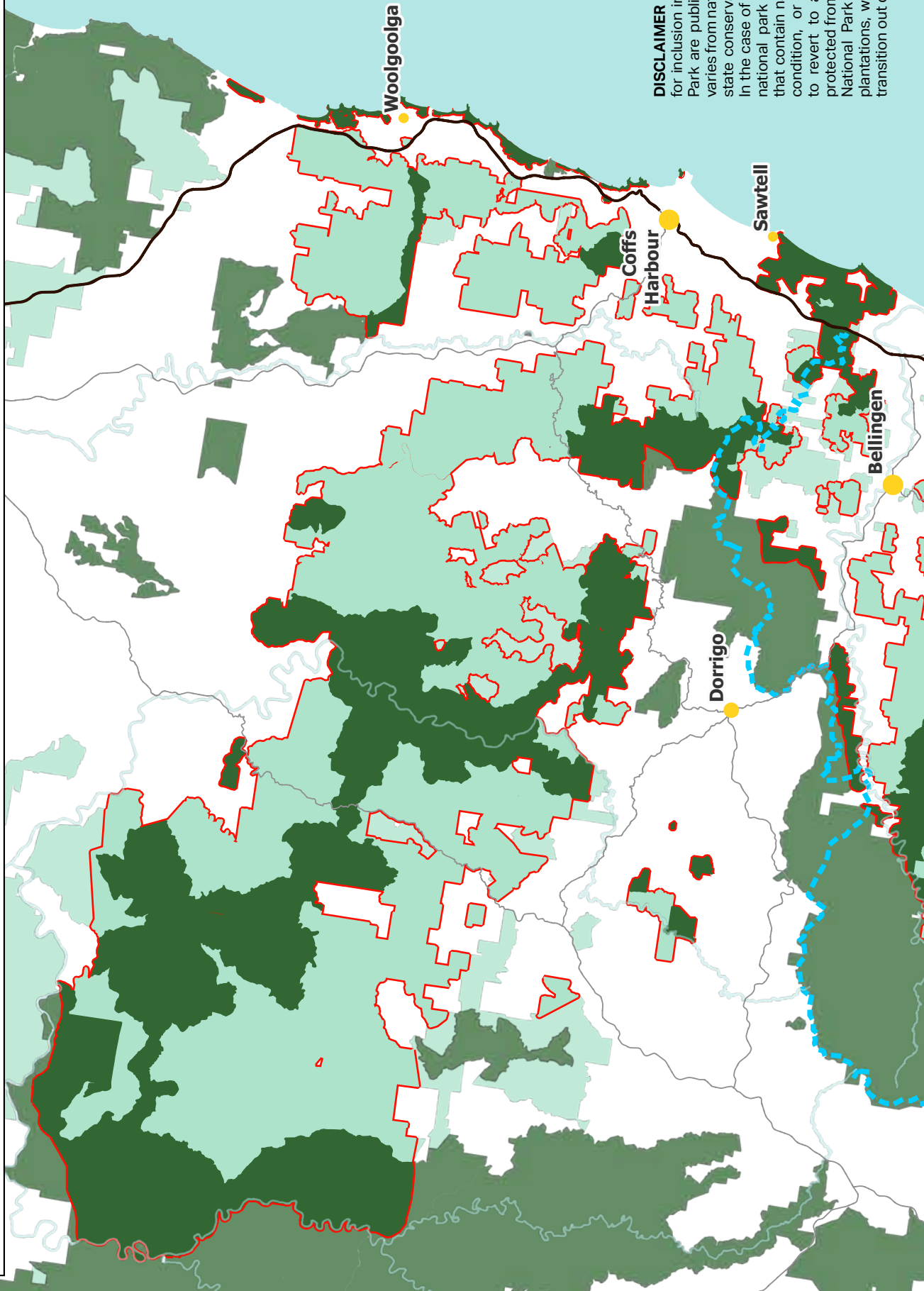
THE REPORT SUMMARISED THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE GKNP AS:

- **Increase in total output of \$1.18 billion over 15 years.**
- **Additional FTEs of 9,810 in new jobs by the end of 15 years.**
- **Additional total value-added of \$531 million over 15 years. Of this, \$330 million is paid in wages and salaries in net present value terms to workers living in the region and environmental benefits that equate to added biodiversity value of:**
- **Around \$530 million for the NSW population.**
- **Around \$1.7 billion for all Australians.**

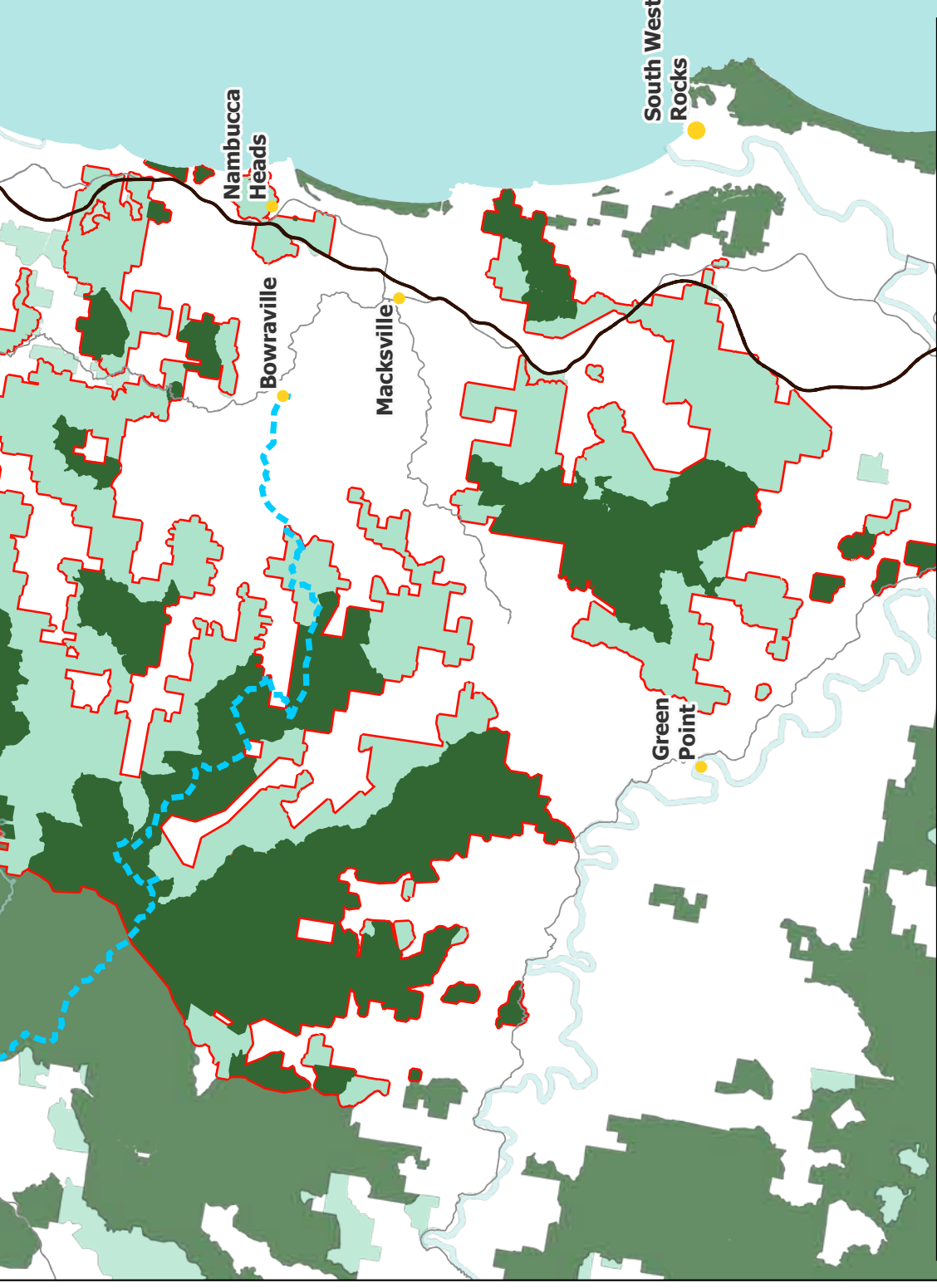
Public Native Forest logging in NSW loses many millions of dollars annually and is propped up each year from the public purse. Forest Corporation suffered a \$20m loss from logging native forest in 2021/22 costing the NSW taxpayer \$441 per hectare^[18] while softwood plantations, delivered a \$3873 profit for every hectare logged.^[19]

The native forests of the proposed GKNP are worth more to Australia environmentally and economically if left standing to ensure a sustainable future for regional economies and future generations.

Great Koala National Park

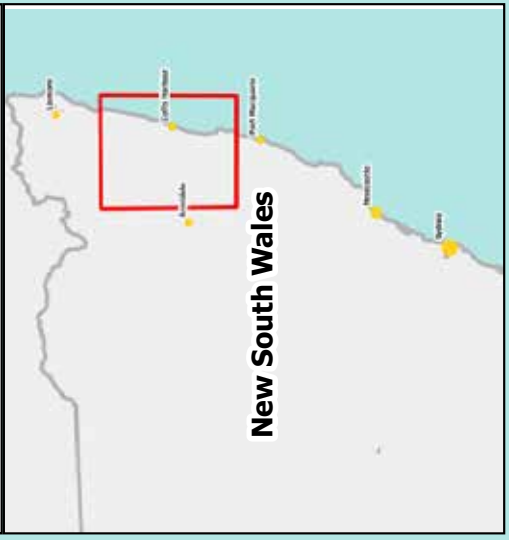


DISCLAIMER All of the areas proposed for inclusion in the Great Koala National Park are public land. Their legal tenure varies from national park, nature reserve, state conservation area to state forest. In the case of the state forests, the new national park would incorporate areas that contain native vegetation in natural condition, or that have the capacity to revert to a natural condition once protected from logging. The Great Koala National Park will not include genuine plantations, which are essential for the transition out of public native forestry.



Legend

- Great Koala National Park
- GKNP Boundary Line
- Long Distance Walking Track
- Tenure
 - National Parks
 - State Forest
- Main Roads
 - Pacific Highway
 - Other roads



NPWS Reserve System and State Forest data sourced from NSW Spatial Services (NSW Department of Customer Service).

Map produced by Stephanie Clark and Samantha Swain, National Parks Association of NSW.

Map produced 16/12/2022
 Coordinate system: GDA2020 / MGA zone 56
 Scale: 1:400,000 at A3

THE STORY OF DUNGGIIRR

Koala

Dunggiirr 'Koalas' are very sacred & powerful, with their magical abilities of creation & transformation.

This artwork is my depiction of a number of Stories & Sacred Places associated with Dunggiirr.



This is the Story for the artwork; Dunggiirr Yuludarlala 'Koala Storyline'

Michael J Donovan © 2020

Dunggiirr originated in the Southern Gumbaynggirr Nation on a Sacred Mountain called Dunggiirr Miirlarl. Their family grew too big for them all to sustainably live on the mountain and from here they spread out across the Gumbaynggirr Nation & into other Tribal Territories across Australia.

In the Creation Story of the Ocean, two young Dunggiirr Brothers saved the Tribe from getting cut off from their Homelands by the rising water. The Brothers took out their magical strings (intestines), threw them across the water & tied them off to a giant Wangaaga 'Tallowwood Tree' creating a bridge for the Tribe to walk back to their Homelands. One of the brothers disappeared and was never seen again, and the other brother was ambushed and killed by two men who threw their Duuwa 'boomerangs' and cut him into three pieces, which formed the three peaks of Yarriabini Mountain.

Long ago, Dunggiirr appeared very differently than it does today. They once had a smaller head, &

a long tail. Dulaybam (Greyface Kangaroo) traded Dunggiirr a bowl in exchange for its tail. Now that they have a bowl in their heads, Dunggiirr don't have to climb down out of the trees as much to drink water.

A young boy & his grandmother were walking along the beach when they spotted hundreds of Garlaany 'papis'. At the same time a big mob was walking towards them in the distance and the boy yelled out to them. His grandmother told him to be quiet, but he couldn't and kept yelling out to the people so his grandmother chased him with a stick, and he ran and climbed a tree and was turned into a Dunggiirr. It is forbidden to share the location of your hunting grounds with others.

There's a Sacred Place on the Nambucca River which is a special breeding ground for Dunggiirr.

The circles on the head represent the bowl Dunggiirr uses to store water.

The circles on one ear represent

where the young boy & his grandmother were on the beach. The circles on the other ear represent where he was turned to Dunggiirr.


The wavy lines on the back & arm represent Yildaan 'Dreaming Track/Storyline' of Dunggiirr. The circles on the hand & semi circles on the back represent the Sacred Sites associated to Dunggiirr.

The spiral on the stomach represents Nandiirr 'intestines/ magic string' also known as a caecum. When the intestines are taken out of a Dunggiirr it has a black footprint on it from when the Tribe walked across the 'magic bridge'.

The leaves represent their main food source, and the medicines they contain.

The spiral on the leg represents Dunggiirr Miirlarl.

The diamonds represent the Sacred parts & places of the Stories which are forbidden to share.



“We believe the GKNP is a positive opportunity to protect and preserve this cultural heritage within a precious biodiversity hotspot.”

Gumbaynggirr Elder's statement - 10 May 2019

Yarriabini Mountain at dawn.

“In our local Gumbaynggirr language the name for koala is Dunggirr”.

Dunggirr are very sacred to our People, Culture, and to the landscape of the Gumbaynggirr Nation itself. The Knowledge of Dunggirr has played a vital role in Gumbaynggirr Creation Stories, Laws & Customs, Spirituality, core values, and our identity.

Dunggirr is a very powerful animal, their magic is very strong, and the Spirit of Dunggirr is both feared and respected. Dunggirr originated here in our Gumbaynggirr Homelands on a Sacred Mountain.

From what I was taught by my Elders, the Dunggirr population grew too many for the mountain to sustain them, so they went out to find new territory to inhabit, creating Storylines across the Gumbaynggirr Nation and into other Tribal Territories right across Australia. Dunggirr are Totemic to a quarter of all Gumbaynggirr Men.

They have survived alongside our People for countless generations through many climate changes, catastrophes, cataclysms and extreme Earth transformations. Despite their population decline due to intensive logging, land clearing, and the recent damaging fires, the colony within the Gumbaynggirr Nation are now the most significant.

That is why the Gumbaynggirr People fully endorse the Great Koala National Park, and we're working together with all relevant parties to ensure their protection and preservation. The establishment of the Great Koala National Park will also help to protect other sacred & significant sites, threatened, endangered, rare, endemic, and special Totemic Flora and Fauna within our Homelands. If they are not protected and they go extinct, we, Gumbaynggirr People, will be strictly forbidden to pass on our Dreaming Stories and Knowledge of Dunggirr to our Children, our Children's Children, and all future generations of Gumbaynggirr People. This is Gumbaynggirr Law.”

Gumbaynggirr Man, Mr Michael Donovan's statement to the NSW Upper House Inquiry into Koala Populations and Habitat. Coffs Harbour, NSW 4th Feb 2020.

A COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN

The GKNP campaign is championed by the National Parks Association of NSW and managed locally by a campaign management team. The team includes representatives of the Bellingen Environment Centre, Nambucca Valley Conservation Association, Gumbaynggirr Nation and key sponsor Affirmations Publishing House, plus a number of skilled volunteers overseeing volunteer coordination, merchandise, lobbying, social media, networking and fundraising.



A dedicated band of volunteers staff regular market stalls within the region, providing information and raising campaign funds through donations and merchandise sales.

Many other conservation organisations and businesses assist and support the GKNP campaign including the NSW Nature Conservation Council, North Coast Environment Council, North East Forest Alliance, Bob Brown Foundation, Clarence Environment Centre, WWF, NPA Coffs Coast Branch, Arnhem Clothing, Wandering Folk, Kombu Wholefoods and Paul Hilton Photography.

Public and business support for The Great Koala National Park proposal is wide and rapidly growing. Our thousands of registered

online supporters are kept informed about the campaign via regular email updates. Our volunteers engage with domestic and international tourists and are frequently met with expressions of disbelief that Koalas are still facing imminent extinction in NSW and that koala habitat continues to be destroyed at an escalating rate across the region.

Two ReachTEL polls conducted for the North Coast Environment Council in 2017 showed seventy per cent of people surveyed supported the creation of new national parks to protect koalas from logging and land-clearing.

The community groups promoting the GKNP proposal also strongly support a job for job guarantee for timber industry workers directly affected by the creation of the GKNP.

GET INVOLVED AND BE PART OF MAKING HISTORY



Visit our website www.koalapark.org.au to:

- Register as a supporter to receive campaign updates and calls to action.
- Sign our online petition.
- Make a tax deductible donation via the National Parks Association of NSW.
- Purchase merchandise via Affirmations Publishing House.
- Join the volunteer market stall team if you live in the Coffs Coast region and want to get hands-on for koalas!

REFERENCES

1. Scotts, D. Conserving koala populations of the NSW upper mid-north coast: preliminary mapping of populations as a basis for further survey, research and planning. (2013).
2. AKF media release, Shocking Figures Reveal The Devastating Impact Of The Koala Fur Trade. (2015)
3. NSW Environment Protection Authority, NSW State of the Environment Report (2021).
4. NSW Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 7, Koala populations and habitat in New South Wales (2020)
5. Pugh D, Saving Banyabba Koalas April 2020.
6. Moore, B. D. & Foley, W. J. Tree use by koalas in a chemically complex landscape. *Nature* 435, 488-490, doi:http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v435/n7041/supinfo/nature03551_S1.html (2005).
7. McAlpine, C. A. et al. The importance of forest area and configuration relative to local habitat factors for conserving forest mammals: A case study of koalas in Queensland, Australia. *Biological Conservation* 132, 153-165, doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2006.03.021> (2006).
8. Shumway, N., Lunney, D., Seabrook, L. & McAlpine, C. Saving our national icon: An ecological analysis of the 2011 Australian Senate inquiry into status of the koala. *Environmental Science & Policy* 54, 297-303, doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2015.07.024> (2015).
9. Van Eeden LM, Nimmo D, Mahony M, Herman K, Ehmke G, Driessen J, O'Connor J, Bino G, Taylor M, Dickman CR (2020) Impacts of the unprecedented 2019-2020 bushfires on Australian Animals. Report prepared for WWF-Australia, Ultimo NSW.
10. UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Gondwana Rainforests of Australia, <<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/368/>> (2014).
11. Cerese, B. The Eucalypt Forests of Northeast New South Wales: A Preliminary Assessment and Documentation of their World Heritage Values. (National Parks Association of New South Wales, Sydney, 2012).
12. Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council. (2010)
13. Youngentob et al. (2012).
14. Bradford, A. 'Deforestation: Facts, Causes & Effects', Live Science, 3 April 2018,
15. Victoria State Government Environment, Land, Water and Planning https://www.delwp.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0023/413096/9-Water-fact-sheet-FINAL.pdf
16. Destination NSW. Nature-based tourism to NSW. Year ended September 2017
17. Hunter Research Foundation, The University of Newcastle: The Great Koala National Park Economic impact analysis and environmental benefit assessment. Executive summary. (2021)
18. \$20m loss: native forest logging last year cost NSW taxpayers \$441 per hectare. Sydney Morning Herald March 15 2022
19. Forestry Corporation Annual Report 2020 – 21. https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/1376877/forestry-corporation-annual-report-2020-21.PDF

PHOTO CREDITS

New England Wilderness from Killiekrankie Mountain, Lyn Orrego. Clear Fell in Lorne SF, Lyn Orrego. Burnt dead koala, Dailan Pugh. Coachwood Falls, Dorrigo NP, Gary Dunnett. Walkers on a section of the proposed Long Distance Walking Trail, Lyn Orrego. Dunggiirr artwork by Michael Donovan. Yarriabini Mountain, Shane Ruming. Stall image, Paula Flack. Abseiling in Dorrigo NP part of the proposed GKNP, Charlotte Miller.

THE NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW

The National Parks Association of NSW is a not-for-profit conservation organisation which has run and won community led conservation campaigns since 1957. It also runs Australia's largest bushwalking program and connects people with nature through community engagement and citizen science programs. To Join NPA or for more information about NPA, its conservation campaigns or bushwalking program visit: www.npansw.org.au




The
**Great Koala
National Park**
Let's make it happen!



Kombu Wholefoods

Anthem