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Media Release

“A legacy of errors.” Wallum Development Significant to Koalas

The approved Wallum development will clear 3.5 hectares of Koala habitat.

Restoration Ecologist, David Rawlins, believes the impact of the Wallum development on Endangered Koalas is significant and is enough of a reason to immediately halt the approved development in Brunswick Heads. However, the federal government needs to step in so further assessments can be urgently undertaken.

As Koalas are listed federally as Matters of National and Environmental Significance (MNES), developers are required to ‘self refer’ to the Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water if a project will have significant impact on Koalas.

Developer Clarence Property refuses to do this for the Wallum Brunswick Heads development.

As outlined in the Federal EPBC Act’s Koala referral guidelines, any loss of Koala habitat greater than 0.5 Ha can have a significant impact on this iconic threatened species. Yet controversially, the approved Wallum development plans to clear 3.5 hectares of Koala habitat.

Habitat removal for development is the most well-known threat to the survival of the endangered koala, and in particular, the clearing of existing and well-established habitat is contradictory to many local, State and Commonwealth guidelines.

“The cumulative impacts from clearing like this will lead to the extinction of this population as it is already under severe pressure from disease, car strike and dog attack. These coastal koalas south of the Brunswick River have become isolated due to the M1 freeway which now will also lead to inbreeding. We need to protect all koala habitat, such as the old growth trees at Wallum if we are to save our local koalas.” says Mr Rawlins.

In what Mr Rawlins terms a ‘legacy of errors’ the Koala habitat of ‘Wallum’ has never been properly assessed for this development and this puts Koalas at further risk, a species listed now as Endangered both in NSW and under the federal Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999).

*“In the early 2000’s, Wallum development consultants incorrectly identified Scribbly Gum *E. signata* as *E. racemosa*. *Eucalyptus racemosa* occurs around Sydney. This was not just a botanical name error, as the*



implication of this misidentification is that the NSW statutory requirements for a primary Koala feed under the 1995 Koala SEPP 44 tree were not triggered”, Mr Rawlins said.

This misnaming was identified by NSW Office of Environment and Heritage as an error , in 2011; “Koalas haven’t been afforded adequate assessment and protection. The misinformation on the tree species was highlighted twice over a decade ago, and ignored due to a lack of transparency and consultation, so they were able to get away with ignoring it, and to this day it is an error. This undermines national recovery for the Koala and threatens efforts to halt their extinction by 2050.” says Save Wallum spokesperson, and ecologist James Barrie.

Despite Minister Plibersek's contentious statement this week that there are no grounds for the federal government to intervene, she does also say ‘developments only need to obtain approval from the federal government when they are likely to significantly impact matters of national and environmental significance.

In response, Dave Rawlins pointed out: *“In 2008 the State Planning Director-General's Environmental Assessment Requirements for the site stated "If your proposal includes any actions that could have a significant impact on matters of National Environmental Significance, it will require an additional approval under the Commonwealth EPBC Act. This approval is in addition to any approvals required under NSW legislation”. After 16 years the proponents have ignored the impacts on MNES and failed to self-refer, so it is time for the Federal Governments to step in”.*

**For further information, hires images or to arrange expert interviews please contact:
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To read more details about the Koala risk at Wallum [please see here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#).

About David Rawlins

Dave Rawlins has a Degree in Zoology and works as a bush regenerator and ecologist in Northern NSW. He has more than 20 years experience as a restoration ecologist, with much of his work restoring habitat in areas containing threatened species and threatened ecological communities; Dave was one of the original complainants against the proposed development in 2011, he again submitted objections in 2021 and is a founding member of Save Wallum.

www.savewallum.com