



## CLARENCE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

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The General Manager  
Clarence Valley Council  
Prince Street  
Grafton, NSW 2460

Dear Sir

### **Proposed off-leash dog area at Iluka**

The Clarence Environment Centre is taking the opportunity to comment on the proposed off-leash dog walking area at Iluka, and highlight the well-established danger that uncontrolled dogs pose to native wildlife.

The two maps sent to us, of the proposed off-leash sites at Iluka and Tucabia, provide a perfect example of good and poor site selection, with the forested Iluka site representing the latter.

We point out that the Iluka site is known habitat for Koalas, which are now listed as a threatened species both state and federally. The Koala is a relatively slow-moving animal and therefore highly vulnerable to dog attack, one of the main threats identified in the Scientific Committee's determination.

In this respect we remind Council of it's Koala Plan of Management's recommendation that: *"Sign posts should be placed in public koala habitat areas requesting that dog owners prevent their dogs entering the area, or as a minimum, requiring that dogs be restrained on a leash"*. We believe this should apply to the proposed off-leash area.

Iluka is surrounded by national park and world heritage rainforest, so responsible dog ownership is important. Council's own Koala Plan of Management identifies that a reduction in Koala deaths from dog attack, *"... is primarily achieved through prevention and regulation of roaming dogs"*. "Off leash" can be akin to "roaming", as it has to be accepted that, while many dog-owners are responsible, and some dogs are well behaved and responsive to commands, other are not.

The current status of the Koala population at Iluka is tenuous at best, and was at one stage thought to be extinct, a fact reflected in CV Koala Plan of Management which mentions that: *"Planning provisions relating to the Iluka locality reflect the uncertain status of the koala population in that area."* However, a number of sightings in recent times, including a female with young, confirms that they are hanging on.

It is already known that the loss of a single koala from a complex family group can cause their numbers to crash (reference Australian Koala Foundation). Hence by the Iluka Koalas' very restricted numbers and habitat, the loss of just a single animal to dog attack could very well trigger the final extinction of this slowly returning population.

Also the proposed off-leash Iluka site is low-lying, with areas that are virtual wetlands during wetter periods. At these times the ponding water attracts a variety of wading and water bird species that would also become an attractive target for dogs off their leash.

However, the Companion Animals Act supports the provision of off-leash areas, and we accept the need for dogs to be able to run and do what dogs do. To this end we are told that there are suitable cleared areas within the village where dogs can be let loose with relative safety, with Jack Austin Park being nominated as one possibility.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment

Yours sincerely  
John Edwards  
Honorary Secretary.