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Miss Catherine Hird, Mr Ross Carter and Professor Richard MacKay, thank you for being here today and for listening to us concerned members of the Tweed Coast community having our last chance to speak up for what we value.

I am a Tweed Coast local and I choose to live here mainly because of the beautiful natural environment that we are so lucky to have. We all feel it is really special to have native species living in our area and we are especially fortunate to have rare and precious koalas in our surrounds. This is a unique and uncommon aspect that we all love about the Tweed Coast.

Koalas especially are loved and adored by all and are recognised throughout the world as an Australian iconic species- a national treasure, found nowhere else but here in Australia. We are lucky to have these beautiful, gentle animals living in the surrounding native bushland.

The fact that koalas are an endangered species means that it is imperative that we put in place clear protective measures at the highest level to give them any chance of survival in their natural habitat.

There are 2 points that I will talk about:

Firstly, Cudgen Paddock, the site of the proposed Golf Course. In the original concept plan of 2010, the Golf Course was to encompass an Ecological Buffer Zone. In 2013, 7.86 hectares of koala food trees were to be planted within this area. **THIS HAS NOT HAPPENED.** This is of great concern because koala food trees need at least 5 years to become established and mature enough to provide food and refuge for koalas. Koala food trees must be planted in a timely manner to support the koalas.

Furthermore, in the developer's proposed modification, fencing is to be placed around the golf course. This proposed fencing will directly impact the koalas as they will not be able to access their food trees but will be kept out of this area. The fencing will also greatly limit their ability to move freely through their natural habitat reducing their chances of finding a mate and reproducing. The fencing will effectively diminish their chances of survival as a species. To put it bluntly, the fencing will lead to starvation and lack of mating opportunities resulting in the koalas dying out in this area.

The second point I will talk about is Biodiversity Responsibility. In the original concept plan, it was established that 27 hectares of offset koala food trees would be planted by the developer. To date, the developer has made no attempt to approach the OEH nor the Tweed Shire Council to secure a binding legal arrangement to enact this agreement. This is another serious concern. This issue must be resolved **BEFORE** any construction begins. In short, the developer must give back to the natural environment before taking the land for their own use.

We, the people of the Tweed Coast value and love our natural environment and koalas are a special and unique part of it. To think of our precious koalas becoming extinct on our watch and for future generations not to have the distinct privilege of having koalas in our area is an unbearable concept. There are many committed community and school groups working hard and doing all they can to highlight the importance of protecting our precious koalas. It is up to us as a community to speak up on behalf of the koalas to ensure that the developer will honour their agreed obligations and adhere to the conditions of the Independent Planning Commission.

To conclude, this is a golden opportunity for the Tweed Coast to be a positive example of how environmentally responsible planning and development in conjunction with environmental protection can be achieved without sacrificing our precious native fauna, showing the world that development can be managed to ensure the preservation of native species.

[REDACTED] I do not allow my personal information to be published with this submission.