



## **NCEC Submission for the Draft Tweed Shire Events Strategy 2016 to 2020**

26<sup>th</sup> January 2016

Tweed Shire Council

The North Coast Environment Council (NCEC) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission for the Draft Tweed Shire Events Strategy 2016 to 2020. The North Coast Environment Council (NCEC) is the peak umbrella environment group on the NSW North Coast, covering the area from the Hunter to the Queensland Border and west to the New England Highway. We have numerous community member groups associated with the NCEC, many working to conserve their local environment like our newest member, the Northern Rivers Guardians.

The NCEC fully supports dot point 5. under your Key Tweed Event Identities/Themes section for events that promote the sustainability and protection of the natural environment. This should be a key condition and should apply to all proposed events for the region. In July 2015, The International Business Times writes that Australia has the worst wildlife extinction record. It also states that the Federal environment minister Greg Hunt urges the local community to participate with the fight against extinction. [1]

In your section of 'Neighbouring and National Success Stories,' you list the Byron Bay Bluesfest, Falls Festival and Splendour in the Grass with flow on benefits to for the Tweed Shire. Unfortunately, these events have come at a cost to our Federally listed vulnerable Koala as determined by Dr. Stephen Phillips who undertook the initial studies of the proposed site and through independent follow up studies. He indicated that of 16 to 20 surveyed koalas initially found close to the site of the north NSW festival in 2010, none were alive today. He said the noise from the festival, which stressed the animals and forced them to move, was the main cause of the deaths. [2]

The NCEC strongly urges that the final strategy does not consider the Byron Bay Bluesfest, Falls Festival and Splendour in the Grass as a neighbouring success. This event that was allowed to be trialled has failed one of Australia's iconic native species with reportedly destroying this population. Events should not come at a cost that risks harming threatened species.

The Tweed has experience with controversial events like the Byron Bay Bluesfest, Falls Festival and Splendour in the Grass. The Repco Rally in 2009 caused considerable division within the Tweed and Kyogle Shire communities. The event was planned behind closed doors and announced with an apology by then general manager Mike Rayner for not being able to advise residents earlier, however there were strict confidentiality requirements in place that embargoed any advice prior to the NSW Government announcement. [3]

This proved to be a big mistake that caused wide protests and the eventual forced moving of the event to Coff's Harbour. This is an important example of local and state government getting the environmental and community consultation wrong and the NCEC strongly opposes lack of proper environmental and social considerations for events.

Dr. Stephen Phillips was employed to do the biological assessment of the Repco Rally's impact on native flora and fauna as the high speed race was to be allowed in Mooball National Park and other National Parks in the region. The terms of reference for the biological assessment were too narrow for a comprehensive analysis for the impact on native flora and fauna.

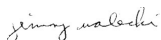
The biological assessment was undertaken during winter. The race was held in spring when native animals are more likely to be moving around and breeding so the impacts on them at their most vulnerable time was not considered properly. The terms of reference only asked if it was likely for any species to go extinct because of the Repco Rally but did not consider the harm or death of threatened species or native wildlife.

In fact, there was the Motor Sports Bill 2009 introduced quickly by the NSW State Government that rendered 12 state a local laws meant to protect clean water, air and our threatened species not applicable to the World Rally Championships. [4] The NCEC strongly urges that the Tweed Shire Events and Strategy Plan 2016 to 2020 includes safeguards for preventing such a huge failure to our environment and community consultation for proposed events. Events should bring communities together, not be divisive as can be seen in the No Rally Video. [5]

The world is now in the sixth extinction event that scientist claim is manmade and something we can address. [6] During the Repco Rally in the Tweed, 14 native animals including reptiles, birds and red-necked wallaby were killed. [7]

The NCEC urges that the Tweed Shire Council does not adopt business as usual policies which demonstrate we have not learned from past mistakes. This is a good opportunity for the Tweed Shire Council to adopt an Events Strategy that puts the health of our native flora and fauna as the upmost consideration in any proposed events, putting protection of threatened species above profits. Tourism is a leading economic driver in the region and should not be dismissed for short term, high impact events. The long term health of our environment should be considered over short term profits as is exemplified with draft statement in the Tweed Shire Events Strategy 2016 to 2020 of the Byron music events at Yelgun. Success appears to be determined by economic benefits, not the impact on our vulnerable Koala and the impacts of the events being held adjacent to the Tyagarah Nature Reserve. Splendour in the Grass may only last a weekend bringing large crowds to the region but it is reported to have killed off a population of Koala. If we look at the science of the current worldwide extinction event we are witnessing with Australia leading, we can no longer consider economics above protection of threatened species for any reason as acceptable.

Yours sincerely



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[1] <http://www.ibtimes.com/australia-has-worst-wildlife-extinction-record-government-launches-threatened-species-strategy-save>

[2] <http://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/jan/20/noise-from-byron-bay-bluesfest-destroys-local-koala-population-says-ecologist>

[3] [www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/Download.aspx?Path=/Controls/...Repco.pdf](http://www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/Download.aspx?Path=/Controls/...Repco.pdf)

[4] [http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/nswbills.nsf/0/328dd61732cd3e50ca2575d7002bf404/\\$FILE/b2009-060-d25-House.pdf](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/nswbills.nsf/0/328dd61732cd3e50ca2575d7002bf404/$FILE/b2009-060-d25-House.pdf)

[5] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOtdwd6Z0fc>

[6] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/06/22/the-earth-is-on-the-brink-of-a-sixth-mass-extinction-scientists-say-and-its-humans-fault/>

[7] <http://www.northernstar.com.au/news/rally-brought-out-worst-in-people/542526/>