



# MEDIA RELEASE

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[14 January 2016]  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Specialist reveals that industry stagnation is killing koalas

***With over 25,000 signatures petitioning for the closing of Koala Park Sanctuary, Australia's leading koala specialist believes that the issue is evident right across the industry.***

With Koala Park Sanctuary in West Pennant Hills pleading guilty to several cases of neglect before the RSPCA, the nation's premier koala nutrition and behavioral specialist, Marcus Zorich, believes this is only one indicator of the struggles currently faced by Sydney's koala industry.

"Even 16 years ago, when all the major zoos and wildlife parks here in Sydney had high numbers of koalas, the signs of cracks were appearing. The captive koala population is at its lowest, with an industry that has struggled to respond to changing environments and business drivers.

"Pennant Hills were the slowest to react. A family business led by people with no formal training, they lacked not only leadership, but failed to understand and accept their vulnerability and duty of care."

Zorich has been campaigning for some time now to raise awareness within the industry about the need for innovation and redirection. With koala nutrition and care being compromised by urban growth, economic squeeze and high staff turnover (leading to ongoing narrowing of education), he believes that, unless the industry comes together to evolve and develop long-term solutions, koalas in captivity will continue to decline in both numbers and health.

"Nutrition, in particular, is being compromised. In the past we had immediate access to the resources we needed to support the koala, but they are no longer a stone's throw away and we don't have the depth of knowledge within the industry to ensure diversity of vegetation."

As a nutrition specialist, Zorich admits that his job is becoming increasingly challenging.

"Our physical environment is changing incredibly quickly. We're reacting to urban sprawl, road changes, development, fencing, and vegetation outgrowing the Eucalyptus trees. We prune the same trees, reducing their life expectancy and creating a vicious cycle. But we're not being proactive and planning for the future."

Zorich is calling for the industry to expose the truth of where koala care is heading. In many facilities, limited staff training results in a diet focused purely on animal *survival*, not enrichment. The result is Koala Park Sanctuary.

"This 'nutrition for survival alone' approach, as opposed to providing a holistic diet that promotes overall health and mental enrichment, needs to be addressed immediately," he said.



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"We need to prevent a repeat of Koala Park Sanctuary. Conservation can align with economic goals and infrastructure development, we just need the public to push the industry to open the discussion."

*ENDS*

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## Contacts

For further information please contact Marcus Zorich, koala nutrition and behavioral specialist, on [marcuszorich@koalaretreat.com](mailto:marcuszorich@koalaretreat.com)  
[www.koalaretreat.com](http://www.koalaretreat.com)