

This is how Koala Retreat identifies itself

“Disruptive Innovation In the Koala Industry”

“What I have in Common with Dr Karl”

Taking on Dr Karl's Advice

Dr Karl's presented Australia's Future via “Challenge of Change” (www.challengeofchange.gov.au) – it is clear that, without long-term plans, as well as innovation in our current infrastructure, the industries of our future will be pretty bleak!

Back in 2009 I had written a paper for ARAZPA (Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks & Aquaria) about this very thing. I've always believed in long-term planning, in delivering constant improvements to our existing Koala industries, in finding new techniques and challenging our existing industries. Unless we start asking more questions, then how can we improve as an industry? If we follow the norm, we are never going to re-invent our chosen profession. How do we deliver improvements within each of our chosen industries without getting too emotionally attached? Do we ever come up with *real* long-term solutions for the challenges in our growing society?

For me, I marvel every time I drive over the Sydney Harbour Bridge, knowing that at the time there was controversy about how and where to get the money for a (seemingly) simple project to solve the travel challenges between the North of Sydney and the City CDB. But there were other factors involved, such as the increasing unemployment levels at the time and the building of something that will leave a legacy, making a statement in construction grandeur.

Well, like Dr Karl presenting a long-term plan for Australia, I'm going to do my part and develop long-term plans for the koala industry. My goal is to innovate – to innovate not only my industry, but to also inspire other industries by working with them, and not against them (this also includes the evil property developers!). This is the very crux of Koala Retreat!

For people who *haven't* yet seen the 15-minute spiel that Dr Karl talks about, he mentions the IGR (Intergeneration Report). It talks about everything I believe in. Long-term planning, finding new and innovative ways for existing industries to develop, and supporting those industries in evolving into and creating completely new industries. This is all to deal with the ongoing growth of the Australian population.

Dr Karl, talks about the 3-P's; Population, Participation and Productivity.

By 2055, it's estimated that **our population** could be 40 million Australians, with around 7 million of those people being over the age of 65. That means we will have older Australians sitting around at home doing nothing. As Dr Karl highlights – we will be larger in size and older in years!

In **our participation** workforce the question is: how do we create an easier transformation and fund our changing society? How do we grow our infrastructure while making it easy for the elderly to get more active in the workforce? How do we support mums returning to work, making child care easier and less expensive?

The third “P” is **Productivity**. Improving our work behaviour and becoming more efficient; generating innovation in business and professional services via new perspectives and technology,

and by disrupting the status quo – which is where Koala Retreat comes into play! We will educate the Australian people around some interesting facts, including the hard truths and reality of the industry – the good, the bad and the ugly. All in order for the Australian public to have a clear picture as to what we do and why we do it – taking them behind the scenes of one of the most labour-intensive animals known in captivity!

The koala industry is very traditional, with little innovation. It's time to reinvent the way we Australians *think* about our koalas, and in-turn the koala industry needs to educate the Australian public as to the expense and hard work that's involved in presenting koalas in captivity! There is so much work involved in explaining to the general public the true complexity involved within this industry.

The funny thing is, koalas are expensive to manage (both in captivity and the wild) but they always pay their way with the correct planning and guidance. The Penrith Lakes infrastructure that we have proposed may seem excessive but, just like the Sydney Harbour Bridge, well worth the investment. It will undoubtedly pay off for many years to come via local employment as well as domestic, interstate and overseas tourism.

The Penrith Lakes Scheme needs to be our next Sydney Harbour Bridge. It needs to:

- Be on the world stage
- Excite people's interest
- Be innovative in design, and
- Work the environment.

Mentally, we as people need to understand our behaviour – we need to have an open mind and not rush for simple and common answers!

In months to come, we will come out with our own regular paper looking at the growing concerns of our Koala situation, disrupt the status quo – for *our* future, as well as that of the koala – and start conversations about:

- Taking a new approach to the koala industry and how we persevere with our traditional approach towards our national icon for their own longevity
- The lack of information and education for the Australian population
- What happened in Victoria – the good, the bad and the (really) ugly
- The positive and negative elements of the AKF
- Old school versus new school thought systems and beliefs
- The two fighting tribes that exist within our Koala captivity management industry
- The dis-connect between the conservationist and captivity management, and
- Promoting a \$2 billion industry and building it up into \$20 billion industry, changing our mythology, and likening this to Dr Karl's presentation of the Intergenerational Report 2015 (IGR).

I see what's happening around Penrith Lakes, without the drama of Australia being in a deep economic depression.

It's so easy to jump on any bandwagon and be negative, making off-the-cuff remarks abounding in negative energy, but to be creative and think of both sides of *any* story requires patience and a huge amount of positive energy. Just to STOP and think requires more energy than maintaining your groove!

The reason I am bringing forward this message is that, for a number of years, I have been actively involved in the industry as a consultant where I bring my own vision for the future of the little Aussie icon, "the humble Koala".

I believe that, at present, we are losing the battle to preserve the essence of what a koala is to us and, amongst in the confusion, we are losing the essence of who they are as an animal. They are an incredibly robust creation when left alone but, in the hands of inconsistent humans being driven by two fighting tribes within our koala Industry, how will the humble koala ever survive?

Being in the koala industry for close to 20 years, I can clearly see that we as a society are losing the battle on two fronts – in the captivity sector and, in some of parts of Australia, the conversation sector. Without innovation and someone speaking out, we are never going to be two steps head of any un-foreseen catastrophic man-made or natural disaster.

I want to build something that will last into the future – that will leave a legacy and make a proactive change to our society. Koala Retreat is more than a destination – it's an innovation. Let's create something extraordinary.

Marcus Zorich

Koala Retreat