

Koala sat in the leaves of the forest. Eucalypt leaves. Leaves as dry as a biblical manuscript. Parched.

In his front paws he held a piece of coal. While he looked at the coal, black and shining, a lump large enough to show in Parliament, his fingers blackened slightly with its dust.

"Hello Koala". A voice hopped from behind a gum tree.

"Oh, hello Roo" said Koala.

"What have you got there?" enquired Roo.

"It's a lump of coal. I found it under the ledge where the rocks layer like a sandwich. It must have fallen down."

"Can you eat it?" asked Roo.

"I don't believe so", said Koala. "I guess over a few years it would become black sand, and I don't like eating sand."

"So what are you going to do with it?" Roo asked rather ruefully, testing whether Koala could bear to let it out of his bare paws.

"I think I will sell it," said Koala.

"Sell it!" exclaimed Roo in such a loud voice it woke Snake.

"Yes" said Koala.

An encouraging "Hiss" snaked into the conversation.

"I believe there is a good market for such essentials in the market economy" said Snake. "You would fetch a good price".

Roo at this point began hopping around like a flapping galah.

"Are you crazy?" His question boomeranged around the bush.

"When you burn coal carbon is released, and you heat the air, which heats the land, which heats the trees, and when trees heat up they cook, like a sacrificial lamb on a barbeque.

"Oh don't be silly" said Koala, who didn't like this association between cooked mutton and coke-a-koala.

"We always have fires in our forests. And we are a big continent."

Snake at this point snaked off and put his head in the sand.

"I wonder what will need to happen to make Koala change his mind? Roo pondered, and he hopped off to warn his Kanga friends.