



Friends of the Koala Code of Conduct

Guiding Principles

Friends of the Koala is licensed to rescue, rehabilitate and release koalas, and this remains our central mission.

Key to our success is the strength of our relationships with our members, with other wildlife and government organisations and with the general public. All of our actions and behaviours in relation to koalas, to other members and to non-members, are governed by this Code of Conduct.

Summary

Members are required to:

1. Work within the central mission of rescuing koalas with the sole intention of rehabilitating and releasing them, consistent with our rehabilitation licence from the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and the Environment (DoPIE).
2. At all times comply with the law, with particular regard to the care and treatment of all animals.
3. At all times comply with the policies of Friends of the Koala.
4. Always act in the best interests of koalas, and without cruelty whether it be by direct action or by neglect.
5. Act in a friendly, polite, tolerant, professional and supportive manner in order to promote a culture of safety and positive relationships between members, other organisations and members of the public.
6. Ensure that safety of members, members of the public and animals is paramount at all times.
7. Refrain from bullying, discrimination, harassment or defamation.
8. Act honestly, and not commit fraud, or misuse the resources of the organisation.
9. Sign a *Confidentiality Agreement* at the commencement of their tenure if they are on the Management Committee.
10. Declare and record any relevant or potential conflicts of interest by submitting the declaration of conflict of interest document to the Committee when requested.
11. Abide by Friends of the Koala's policy on social media: i.e.

- avoid expressing opinions contrary to our policies and in ways that could bring Friends of the Koala into disrepute and/or damage relationships between members and/or with other organisations
- not show koalas in care being inappropriately handled (i.e. they are not pets) on personal Social Media sites
- not imply Friends of the Koala's endorsement of personal views or for personal gain.

Care of Koalas

All members are to read and abide by the terms of Friends of the Koala's rehabilitation licence and NPWS's *Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned koalas*.

Koalas that come into care must be assessed for rehabilitation and release and treated in the best way to minimise suffering.

Koalas in care are not pets, and must be rehabilitated in a manner that will maximise their chance of survival when they are returned to the wild.

If there is a need to report an incident, this should be done in a way that promotes the best koala care and supports the member to improve their care practices. An incident can be reported to the Care Coordinator or the Vet Nurse. Serious instances, such as neglect or mistreatment, should be reported to the Committee through the Care Coordinator.

All details of a koala's care and fate must be reported using the standard Animal Record Form. As well as for statistical purposes, these details allow us to build up an understanding of emerging threats to koalas, such as problem areas for road kill and effective rehabilitation treatments.

Friends of the Koala provides training for new and current members. Completion of the basic training is required for full membership. Approved refresher courses are required for all members every three years.

Relationship with other members

Professional standards of behaviour are required by all members, who should comply with reasonable directions given by someone in Friends of the Koala who has authority to give directions including Vet Nurse, Coordinators, Shift Supervisors and the Operations and Communications Manager. Discrimination, bullying or harassment, physical or verbal

intimidation or behaviour that publicly undermines other members, such as negative personal comments on social media or in meetings, or to other members of Friends of the Koala will not be tolerated. Members are entitled to their private views, but are not to express personally destructive or intimidating comments in any public forum or within the association.

Breaches of Friends of the Koala's policies, including this Code of Conduct, should be reported to the Volunteer Coordinator, the President or the Committee as appropriate. Members are strongly encouraged to discuss issues before they become critical.

The Management Committee will attempt to resolve incidents referred to them, in accordance with our disputes policy. Where necessary, disciplinary action may be taken. The Committee will be responsible for investigating the situation and determining an appropriate response.

The Management Committee may undertake disciplinary action against members if the complaint or incident is upheld. Repeated or serious offences can result in a member being expelled from the organisation. (*Refer to FOK Constitution Section 17*)

Friends of the Koala is obliged to report any member who is suspected of criminal actions to NSW Police, particularly with regard to animal cruelty, assault or fraud.

Members who are charged with, and/or convicted of serious criminal offences, such as animal cruelty, or assault can be banned from the organisation permanently. Any member closely associated with those charged, or present when animal cruelty offences occurred, may also have restrictions placed on their membership.

Relationship with members of the public

Any member of the public who reports a koala in need of care has taken an important first step toward allowing it to be rehabilitated.

Members of the public who have been inadvertently, either directly or indirectly responsible for injuries to animals, should be treated courteously. Where possible rescuers should advise the public how to avoid these injuries in future. Rescuers could take appropriate Friends of the Koala educational material, such as leaflets, to rescues.

A polite and responsive rescuer is our best chance to persuade members of the public to

behave sympathetically to koalas. Understanding the viewpoint of the public allows us to frame a response that may help educate them, and gives us insights into better strategies.

In cases of suspected or proven intentional cruelty, it is advisable for the member to call the relevant authority e.g. NSW Police or RSPCA and then report this matter to the Management Committee.

Public Relations and Educational Activities

Members will only make public statements on behalf of Friends of the Koala if delegated to do so by the Committee.

Members involved in public relations activities, such as making comments in the media, or participation in public events, should be conscious that they are representing Friends of the Koala, and behave accordingly. Friends of the Koala's Operations and Communications Manager should be consulted for guidance and notified of such activities in advance.

Educational activities, such as visits to community groups or schools, should be made in compliance with our current Licensing Requirements.

If permission has been given for the use of koalas in permanent care for education purposes, handlers must never put the animals in positions of stress, and members should be aware of and follow the latest guidelines.

Koalas undergoing rehabilitation should not be used in educational events.

Relationships between Friends of the Koala and other wildlife organisations

Friends of the Koala works cooperatively with several other organisations, including WIRES, Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers, Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers, Team Koala, Bangalow Koalas, the Keen Street Veterinary Clinic and Currumbin and Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospitals, as well as IFAW. These relationships are extremely valuable and allow us to provide the best care for koalas across the Northern Rivers Region. Members should refrain from participating in 'competitive' behaviour or making disparaging comments about other organisations, but should strive to enhance our relationship with these organisations at every opportunity.

Confidentiality

All 'in confidence' matters must be treated as such.

Members have access to a variety of documents related to many aspects of policy, procedure and governance of the organisation. These documents are the property of the organisation and can only be shared with those outside the organisation with advance notice and permission of the Committee.