



If you see a sick, injured or dead koala, call the rescue hotline:  
6622 1233

# Treetops

The Newsletter of Friends of the Koala Inc.

September 2014

Patron: Margot Sweeney (CEO, Summerland Credit Union)



## Saving Ballina's Koalas – the Upgrade Approval Decision

The Federal Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt approved the proposed Pacific Highway Upgrade from Woolgoolga to Ballina on 14 August. His decision didn't give us the degree of certainty we had hoped for, i.e. it fell short of re-routing Section 10 away from the Wardell-Blackwall Range koala population, nevertheless, we are not entirely disappointed.

The Minister imposed 26 environmental conditions including a range of mitigation measures which are critical to avoiding impacts to koalas and other threatened species along the proposed route.

In regard to the 13 kms of Section 10 he ruled that construction cannot commence until he has approved the Ballina Koala Plan which the NSW Roads and Maritime Service (RMS) must develop in addition to the Koala Management Plan(s) required under the NSW approval conditions. The Ballina Koala Plan must include modelling of the koala

population's viability and be peer-reviewed by a suitable expert. The Koala Management Plan for Section 10 must be consistent with the Ballina Koala Plan and can only be submitted to the Minister for approval after he has approved the Ballina Koala Plan.

will eventually collapse due to depleted recruitment. The wider impact of the population's demise is, at this stage, somewhat speculative. We anticipate genetic analysis will confirm a relationship with surrounding populations. If this is the case then the entire koala population north of the Richmond River could be at risk should the route proceed.

**URGENT COMMUNITY ACTION NEEDED**

**TO PROTECT KOALA POPULATION FROM EXTINCTION**



**TWO HUNDRED KOALAS** are facing injury and death if the proposed Stage 10 route of the Pacific Highway upgrade goes ahead.

If you want to protect our koalas and other local wildlife for generations to come, please take just five minutes to contact Kevin Hogan MP's office today and urge him to take your message to Environment Minister, Greg Hunt.



CALL 6621 4044 OR EMAIL [KEVIN.HOGAN.MP@APH.GOV.AU](mailto:KEVIN.HOGAN.MP@APH.GOV.AU)

THE FINAL DECISION IS DUE ON THURSDAY 14TH AUGUST, SO PLEASE ACT TODAY. FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [WWW.IFAW.ORG](http://WWW.IFAW.ORG)



*Advertisement in The Daily Examiner and The Northern Star in the week leading up to the decision announcement*

Over 50,000 people, most from within Australia, responded to IFAW's various calls for action making Ballina's koalas a high-profile test-case for koala protection under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*. This very high interest was not lost on the Minister who has a legal responsibility to protect koala populations that meet criteria for recognition

as an important population for the Act's purposes.

Since the announcement Friends of the Koala has discussed aspects of the decision with the Minister's office. We have instructed EDO NSW to seek reasons under section 13(1) of the *Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977* for his decision.

The work needed to Save Ballina's Koalas is far from over. RMS says it is committed to working with koala experts, Ballina Shire Council and the wider community in the months ahead.

We wish to sincerely thank everyone who has played a part in getting the Campaign to this very significant point.

—Lorraine Vass

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The fact that Minister Hunt has singled out Section 10 for further work is encouraging. Our understanding is that he is putting the onus on RMS to demonstrate that the koala population's long-term (ie. 50 years hence) viability will be assured. In doing so he remarked on his careful consideration of the NSW government assessment report, public submissions, the findings of the Ballina Shire Koala Study and further koala population modelling that was submitted to him late in the process.

The population modelling was undertaken by Dr Steve Phillips, whose conservative analysis predicts the likelihood of the meta-population's functional extinction by 2035 if the NSW-approved route proceeds. The smaller eastern cell (approximately 80 koalas) will go first and the larger western cell (120 animals)

## President's Message

Like all Australians, members of Friends of the Koala were appalled by the shooting of Glen Turner, an Office of Environment and Heritage Compliance Officer at Croppa Creek, northeast of Moree on 29 July.



Lorraine Vass

At the root of the tragedy is the government's responsibility to protect intact native vegetation and the biodiversity it supports and the demands of some farmers, mining and developer groups for less regulation and greater freedom to clear vegetation.

The alleged perpetrator's family had been ruled to have illegally cleared more than 500 ha of native vegetation including 3,402 trees. A land remediation order was in appeal. Following the shooting further alleged clearing took place, some on land that had been set aside for remediation.

It's no coincidence that the areas of NSW that are subject to the highest rates of erosion and salinisation correspond to those with historically high rates of clearing and current demands for more clearing. It seems some broad-acre farmers simply have to maximise their production, even to the extent of breaking the law or at least sailing very close to the wind. Most however are law-abiding and some even manage to preserve and rehabilitate the woodland remnants that are so critical to native animals. Similarly disparate attitudes prevail in the modest-sized farms and orchards of the Northern Rivers.

As I'm writing the Shooters and Fishers Party's bill seeking to reduce fines for illegally clearing vegetation (and including penalties for obstructing a compliance officer) is before the NSW government. If supported the bill would cut the maximum penalty for illegal clearance of \$1.1 million to \$110,000 and the penalty for obstruction from \$110,000 to \$1,100. The proposal to reduce penalties by up to 90% must surely be considered an ambit claim, even in the present climate.

The bill was introduced in May in advance of the Government's review of NSW's biodiversity legislation, specifically the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*, the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*, the *Nature Conservation Trust Act 2001* and sections of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

The review will clearly have critical implications for native plants and animals. In the wake of recent changes to the *Native Vegetation Regulation* which provides self-assessable codes for certain "low risk" activities, and the introduction of the *Rural Fires Amendment (Vegetation Clearing) Act 2014* and the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice, there are real doubts as to whether existing environmental standards will be adhered to as is claimed in the review's terms of reference.

Indeed, for biodiversity loss to stop in NSW protections additional to those in existence will be necessary. These would include a commitment to 'no net loss' of native vegetation; protection of re-growth vegetation; improved education and enforcement for protecting native vegetation; mandatory recovery plans for threatened biodiversity, extending and safeguarding protected areas such as the Parks estate; and increased efforts to combat invasive species.

We are fortunate that koala conservation is so strongly supported in the Northern Rivers. There are hundreds of wonderful landholders busily planting koala habitat and five councils committed to preparing and implementing comprehensive koala plans of managements. Nevertheless the likelihood of watered down environmental protections at the State level is a concern because inevitably local government protections will be diminished. Besides, there are always the "smarties" (not to mention government itself) who will exploit the loopholes inherent in legislation.

This time of year is always hectic. Animals are on the move, grants must be acquitted (and new ones applied for), field days start popping up, our species and other returns must be prepared, the financials *audited* and the annual report written in anticipation of the Annual General Meeting.

Friends of the Koala's Strategic Plan went missing in action during 2013-14. Having announced a planning exercise and inviting participation from our members and partners during the first quarter of 2013 we simply failed to get on with the job of writing

up the results. Over the past couple of months a small group has been catching-up and the summarised Plan is presented opposite. The Strategic Plan and its associated action plan will guide our work and our performance reported on at the end of the coming year.

Elsewhere in this issue of *Treetops* we cover Minister Hunt's approval of the Pacific Highway Upgrade (lead story) and provides updates on koala health research, koalas and dogs, Royal Camp's koalas and the Wilsons River Catchment Education and Restoration Project. There's also the late Jim Ormond's wonderful reminiscences on local koala conservation in the 1950s and 60s, a piece on Southern Cross University's koalas, an intern's perspective on the FOK experience, as well as the usual reports, announcements and bits and pieces.

In concluding this Message, I sincerely thank my out-going committee colleagues and those folk who are stepping down from named positions. It has been a truly hectic and on balance, somewhat frustrating year.

Nevertheless, Friend of the Koala continues to expand its networks and to build new alliances, positioning us to respond vigorously to the conservation issues confronting our koalas. The Committee's counsel and leadership is, I believe, well-received by our passionate members. Thank you all for working so tirelessly, beyond the call of duty, for our members and a better future for koalas across the Northern Rivers.

—Lorraine Vass



Kevin Hogan MP at the Care Centre with (l-r) Lili Bailly, John Stock, Julie Reid, Lola Whitney and Simon Lamont

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2013 – 2018

Our key strategic objectives for the planning period focus on six areas which reflect Friends of the Koala's areas of core business and are consistent with relevant objectives of the National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009-2014, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, the NSW Recovery Plan for the Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) the NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, *State Environmental Planning Policy 44 – Koala Habitat Protection*, the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* and NSW 2021 in so far as they are applicable to koalas.

### These areas are:-

- ◆ Habitat enhancement;
- ◆ Koala rescue, rehabilitation and release;
- ◆ Research;
- ◆ Community education;
- ◆ Our people;
- ◆ Financial sustainability.

### 1. HABITAT ENHANCEMENT

We will work to ensure the protection and enhancement of koala habitat with particular emphasis on the Northern Rivers Region of New South Wales.

#### Strategic Objectives:

- ◆ That the FOK plant nursery be developed as the region's central authority for advice regarding koala habitat management and revegetation as well as the key supplier of koala food tree species.
- ◆ To maintain and extend partnerships with all levels of government, community organisations and individual landholders to promote and encourage natural resource management outcomes which provide koala habitat connectivity and assist koala population recovery.
- ◆ To facilitate through advocacy and

campaigning government policy reform that is favourable to koala conservation.

### 2. KOALA RESCUE, REHABILITATION & RELEASE

We will provide and continue to improve a rescue and rehabilitation service for sick and injured koalas within our licensed area of operation with the goal of releasing animals back into the wild.

#### Strategic Objectives:

- ◆ To increase FOK's rescue capacity by maximising its ability to undertake koala rescues in varied circumstances.
- ◆ To exercise best practice methods in the care and rehabilitation of koalas and utilise its expertise and learning to assist in the continuous improvement of licensed care and rehabilitation methods.
- ◆ To maximise community and government financial support in order to provide the best care possible for koalas.

### 3. RESEARCH

We will continue to contribute to the body of scientific knowledge in relation to the koala through partnerships with key stakeholders including universities and other research organisations, individual researchers, wildlife hospitals and government, as well as advocating for increased research in identified areas of need.

#### Strategic Objectives:

- ◆ To maintain, support and extend where possible working relationships with a broad range of academic and research organisations and individuals working in koala-related research.
- ◆ To ensure that appropriate data collection, storage and retrieval systems are in place to enable sharing as required.

### 4. COMMUNITY EDUCATION

We will add to the community's understanding of koalas.

#### Strategic Objectives:

- ◆ To raise the profile of koala conservation issues and promote opportunities for community involvement.
- ◆ To ensure that visitors to the FOK Care Centre have an enjoyable and educational experience in an authentic koala habitat setting.
- ◆ To pursue new initiatives and funding for koala-focussed community education.

### 5. OUR PEOPLE

We will strengthen the organisation by developing and enhancing a robust membership, volunteer base and management framework.

#### Strategic Objectives:

- ◆ To preserve and enhance the organisation's reputation and good standing through inclusive governance and policies.
- ◆ To develop the knowledge and skills-base of volunteers through ongoing training and education.
- ◆ To support and acknowledge volunteers carrying out their roles.

### 6. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

We will enable the delivery of FOK's strategic objectives by ensuring the long term financial health and sustainability of the organisation.

#### Strategic Objectives:

- ◆ To ensure financial accountability in all areas of operation.
- ◆ To secure broad-based financial support and income streams.
- ◆ To maintain a transparent legal, compliance, and risk management framework.



7th to 17th of November  
**Koala Count**  
BioTag [koalacount.org.au](http://koalacount.org.au)





NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW  
protecting nature through community action

# It's back!

To register go to  
[koalacount.org.au](http://koalacount.org.au)

## Care Coordinator's Report

Spring, my favourite season of the year; the warm temperate days are wonderful. I think it is the same for koalas. Even the sick animals in care appear to be enjoying the filtered sun lighting up their enclosures. The milder days mean of course that koalas are more active and encountering danger. For example, recently at Parrots Nest, a female was found with her head caught in a steel fence. Sadly she had already died from strangulation trying to free herself.



Pat Barnidge

At present we have no permanent care koalas at the Care Centre. With the loss of Rosalie, our little Sweetie fell ill. After some tests at the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital (AZWH), she received minor abdominal surgery. We understand that she is bright and eating well, however vet Claude wants her to stay a little longer to make sure she will be sufficiently recovered to return to us.

Due to the delay in supply of the antibiotic Chloramphenicol, we have close to a full house at the Care Centre. We were fortunate that, thanks to the services of our local vet Ray Austin, sick koalas were able to be kept on a maintenance regime, without the disease progressing too much. However we did lose one animal, Neil, who had severe cystitis. Despite our best efforts to restore his gut flora with pap, it was sadly too late to be of assistance and he had to be euthanased. His age was also a factor; at 10 he was getting on in years.

Little Chan, a joey from the Clarence sadly succumbed after emergency surgery was performed at AZWH. Chronic starvation appeared to have been the main cause of death. Too long on her own, without Mum was a death sentence for her. Another tiny joey that came in taken from her Mum when she died, was a little female named Clover. Weighing only 148gr we thought she had a chance. But even in the care of an experienced joey carer, Clover took a sudden downturn and sadly died.

Hand raised joeys Tuppence and Little Miss have finally been released after one failed attempt. Such a funny story: a few weeks beforehand Barbara Dobner had released them. A couple of days later when she was out walking, a koala jumped out of a tree onto her boot! The koala was Little Miss. Barb put her back

in the enclosure for observation. The next day, Barbara was at the soft release tree; who was there but Tuppence! He was also keen to come back home and even jumped over the gate to get back in. They have been sighted since their second release and Barbara has said they both look well and able to feed themselves.

Our release numbers are starting to mount. Karen a very pretty female was released after five months in care for treatment of her cystitis. This was Karen's second time in care. The first time she was healthy but in a dangerous location. Hopefully her second release will be successful. She is closer to her home range and has been sighted with a big male nearby.



Karen

Also released was a big boy named Hank, or more often 'Cranky Hanky'. Cranky did not take kindly to his injections for conjunctivitis and was constantly flicking his ears in annoyance whenever a carer approached. He gave Susannah a nasty bite, hence his nickname. He was released back into his favourite tree at his rescue site; happily eating leaf as we said goodbye.



Hank at release

Gideon was a very lucky boy who had an encounter with a young greyhound. After five days at Currumbin Hospital being carefully checked out he was tagged and released none the worse for wear. I did hear that the greyhound was sporting a couple of scratches on his nose and face; a rare win for the koala.

Powerman, a tagged koala that was recently rescued had been released in Febuary 2013. He was a sad sight to see: very emaciated with multiple health issues. The diagnosis was retrovirus (KRoV). He was euthanased.

Although the tag number could not be read, a koala who we are pretty sure is a female called Lucinda and her

backyoung were also sighted recently. Lucinda was released back in 2008. It is so good to see a nine year old female still producing and looking healthy. Also sighted again was a hand raised joey, Inez released in 2012. She was sighted back near her soft release site with her second joey. We like to think she comes back to show off her new bub, much to the delight of her guardians.

Desley and Dixie who first came into care in January have finally moved on. After seven months in care Desley was released back in her home range. Lola Whitney had the pleasure of opening her cage and with amazement we watched this beautiful now healthy female shoot up the tree so fast, that no photos were taken until she finally settled 30 metres up.

The not so little Dixie had been put into soft release with Scooter six weeks before. The 3.5kg youngster was no longer tolerated by Desley so Dixie and Scooter are now awaiting their next move into the big soft release tree where they will fine-tune their climbing skills in preparation for release.

Joining Scooter and Dixie is another little female called Tinkerbelle. She was found on the ground suffering mild hypothermia and weighing only 437gr. At present, home-carer Jenny has her indoors where she is being given lots of leaf tip and milk supplements. Jenny says she is progressing well, leaping off the branch of her indoor tree frame onto Jenny's head!

Four car-hits within 24 hours on 18/19 August pulled us up with a jolt. Three of them are still battling for survival in the Intensive Care Unit at AZWH.



Fortunate Zen suffered minor internal trauma from a car hit and will go home soon

Two koalas have returned from AZWH, one a now robust young male who has been in care for over six months with Grade 3 bi-lateral conjunctivitis. Because he was rescued as a 2kg joey, found near his deceased dog attack

mother, he will now go into soft release to hone his climbing skills.

At present we have a total of 24 koalas are in care, a high number that will take time to get through to release, especially those animals in need of Chloramphenicol. We are hopeful of good outcomes.

I want to extend my thanks to the Lismore Mens' Shed who kindly spot-welded two of our much-used rescue

cages free of charge. These kind and generous acts by the community are what I love about the Lismore area.

Again, a huge thank you to our Keen Street Vets, Ray and Bec. Also for the unfailing support of Currumbin Wildlife Hospital and AZWH who take on the serious trauma cases.



I am hoping to have some good news on the Chlamydia Vaccine in my next report.

Happy koala spotting  
—Pat Barnidge

Vet Rebecca Knee and her 'joey' May visit the Koala Care Centre

**Koala Care Statistics 30 May 2014 – 23 August 2014**  
Friends of the Koala attended to or provided advice on a total of 152 koalas

	In Care	Released	Died	Dead on Arrival	Euth.	Unable to find/capture	Advice
<b>Injured (4)</b>				<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>HBC– Road strike (15)</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>Dog attack (3)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>				
<b>Diseased/Sick (42)</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Health status unknown /unrecorded (17)</b>				<b>11</b>			<b>6</b>
<b>Healthy/Assumed Healthy (57)</b>		<b>1</b>					<b>56</b>
<b>Orphans/joeyes (12)</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		
<b>Permanent Care (2)</b>	<b>1</b>				<b>1</b>		
<b>Totals (152)</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>67</b>

**Rosalie – R.I.P.**

In early June we sadly lost the third of our much loved permanent girls, Rosalie. She was aged seven years.

Rosalie's journey into care began in March 2010, when she was found sitting on the ground at Rosebank in the north of the Lismore local government area. Once at the Care Centre, it was soon apparent that she was carrying a joey in her pouch. Veterinary examination saw her diagnosed with mild conjunctivitis.

Because of the joey, Rosalie was placed in home-care with Barbara Dobner. Treatment for the conjunctivitis commenced but after three weeks of antibiotic injections Barbara concluded that Rosalie's condition was more serious. She and her female joey, now named Alika were transported to Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital (AZWH) for further diagnosis and treatment.

Barbara's observations were confirmed. The vets found that Rosalie had a con-



genital eye condition and was totally blind.

Concern then focussed on her joey as it was possible that Rosalie's genetic defect had been passed onto her. Rosalie and Alika spent a long six months at AZWH and finally Alika was cleared of any eyesight problems. Although Rosalie could never be released, Alika's future was bright. In October 2010 both Rosalie and her, by now finely furred joey, returned to the Care Centre.

It was fascinating for the FOK carers to watch their behaviour. As Alika grew and started riding on Rosalie's back, like any Mother, Rosalie would give Alika a gentle cuffing or bite to let her know she was naughty.

Rosalie had been joined by Hera, who was also blind and she too had a little joey, a male called Zeus. The two joeys were full of beans and tested their Mums' patience. By July 2011 both were fully weaned and sent to soft release, from where they were finally released back to the wild.

Rosalie had a beautiful nature and would always wait patiently for her morning supplements. At times I felt that she had the ability to look deep into my soul, even though she was blind. I know that all her carers had special feelings for her.

Rosalie fell ill quite suddenly and spent the last three days of her life at the Keen Street Veterinary Clinic where she was put on IV fluids and medication for pneumonia.

Care Centre Coordinator, Lola Whitney spent every day with her, trying to get her to take paste and feed her leaf. Vet Ray Austin made the decision that she was not improving and she was put to sleep. The necropsy clarified that Rosalie had "floppy heart" or cardio myopathy. It was of some solace to all that nothing more could have been done.

The Clinic staff kindly placed Rosalie in a lovely calico bag with a small bunch of wildflowers. Rosalie was buried at the Care Centre next to Hera.

Enclosure 1 is a sad, empty place at present but I know it's only a matter of time before other koalas in need of rehabbing will come along.

—Pat Barnidge

## Care Centre Co-ordinator's Report

Leading up to the Annual General Meeting is a busy time. Writing our pieces for the Annual Report covering the period 1 July to 30 June, and then



Lola Whitney

our pieces for *Treetops* over the past quarter is quite confusing. The meeting arrangements need to be made as well.

Looking back on the year that's gone is always gratifying however,

bringing home how much we get done - the number of animals we've cared for, people's comings and goings and all the other work associated with the Care Centre.

As Pat has explained, this winter we've had a few more animals than usual in care (as a write, we're already near capacity with nine koalas). Thus the maintenance

jobs which need seeing to so we're prepared for the busyness of the warmer months have taken a bit more planning. Notwithstanding an EnviTE work team led by Chris Owen has replaced the sand in Enclosure 1 and Rick Stewart, Roy Johnson and Simon Lamont have built new perches for Enclosure 2. Thankyou to everyone involved in these two projects.



Lola releases Desley

Changes in government policies have meant that we are receiving more requests from job placement agencies to take on people who are required to work voluntary hours to be eligible for welfare payments. The sort of work we mostly offer is nursery duties, leaf collecting and general handyman. Although part of the agencies' responsibility is to select on the criteria we provide, the results are not always as satisfactory as we would hope and being a totally voluntary workplace, the supervision required can sometimes be burdensome.

Having said that there have been instances where such people have made an extremely worthwhile contribution and we feel that we have helped them acquire or develop social skills and confidence. Perhaps unsurprisingly they are

usually the ones who are soon offered employment.

I often mention the visitors who find the Koala Care Centre but some visits are arranged. At the end of July we hosted a meeting with Lismore Council Rangers to discuss protocols and education on dogs and koalas. A week later a group of Japanese high school students in Lismore to celebrate the 51<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the sister city relationship between Lismore and Yamato Takada visited the Koala Care Centre and I felt very privileged to be their tour guide.

Just a couple of weeks ago, Member for Page, Kevin Hogan also visited. It was a wet morning so after showing him around the runs we adjourned inside where we discussed Minister Hunt's decision on the Pacific Highway Upgrade and some other matters we were keen to bring to his attention.

This is my tenth year with Friends of the Koala. I joined in October 2004, was

rostered at the Koala Care Centre and took on a few rescues. My journey since then has been interesting and fulfilling, not least these past five years co-ordinating the Koala Care Centre and the wonderful volunteers who care for the koalas there.

I'd like to finish up with a good news story about Desley who has been mentioned several times through the year. Back in August we took her home to Ruthven and I had the pleasure of releasing her. Her time in care had been so trying we really didn't know quite what to expect. Nervous and excited for her I opened the cage and she FLEW up the tree - no stops, no looking back. She was home! I would never have believed after being with us so long that she would have the strength to run up the tree like that, but she did.

I was overcome with joy and a sense of sheer wonderment at the tenacity and resilience of these amazing animals.

—Lola Whitney

## Leaf Co-ordinator's Final Report

A frosty winter has left us with a legacy of poor leaf quality and "leafers" are searching further afield to find less frost affected leaf. Koalas in the Care Centre have not built up to summer numbers yet, so we have a reasonable work load to collect leaf each day.



Dot Moller

Five new leaf collectors have arrived to take the pressure off our committed team. Three work placement members and two volunteers from the community joined us in August. Training takes place in one morning then new leafers go out usually once a week with their assigned "Senior Leaffer" on their chosen morning. The days are growing warmer (thank goodness) so going out in the morning is most pleasant.

This will be my last contribution to *Treetops* in the role of Leaf Collection Coordinator. I have enjoyed over three years looking after a dedicated team of "Leafies". Following on from the inimitable Rick Stewart, I have set up an interactive Roster system; instigated and conducted Leaf Collection Training workshops; and formalized protocols for safety (including Rick's invaluable assistance with developing safety protocols for the Rous Water Plantation). The position will

become vacant at the AGM. I encourage our active members to take up the Leaf Collection baton.

Any organisation benefits if there is a sharing of the load. I have gained more confidence, new friends, and a greater understanding of environmental matters, people skills, and the workings of Friends of the Koala through this role.

I am happy to be leaving the position with an invigorated leaf collection program and the future looking assured for the supply of leaf to the Koala Care Centre.

Thank you to our wonderful Leaf Collecting team for being such a great bunch of people to work with and very special thanks to John Stock and Paul O'Donnell for filling in on days when other Leafers have not been available.

I look forward to leaf collecting on my usual Saturday mornings for a long time to come – a special privilege.

—Dot Moller

## University of the Sunshine Coast Koala Research Centre

### Timms & Polkinghorne move their Koala Research Team to the University of the Sunshine Coast



Dr. Adam Polkinghorne and Prof. Peter Timms

After a long association with QUT, Professor Peter Timms and Dr Adam Polkinghorne moved their Koala Research Team to the University of the Sunshine Coast in January 2014. They have rapidly re-established a strong and very active group at USC under the umbrella of the USC Koala Research Centre. The Centre includes 2 academic staff, 3 postdoctoral research fellows and 3 current PhD students, working on koala disease.

### Research shows that the cytokine, interleukin-17 is key in koala chlamydial disease:

Finishing PhD student, Marina Mathew recently published an exciting paper in the journal, *Development and Comparative Immunology*; Abstract shown below (Mathew, M., Waugh, C., Beagley, K., Timms, P., Polkinghorne, A., 2014. Interleukin 17A is an immune marker for chlamydial disease severity and pathogenesis in the koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*). *Dev. Comp. Immunol.* 46, 423-429).

The koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) is an iconic Australian marsupial species that is facing many threats to its survival. *Chlamydia pecorum* infections are a significant contributor to this ongoing decline. A major limiting factor in our ability to manage and control chlamydial disease in koalas is

a limited understanding of the koala's cell-mediated immune response to infections by this bacterial pathogen. To identify immunological markers associated with chlamydial infection and disease in koalas, we used koala-specific Quantitative Real Time PCR (qRT-PCR) assays to profile the cytokine responses of Peripheral Blood Mononuclear Cells (PBMCs) collected from 41 koalas with different stages of chlamydial disease. Target cytokines included the principal Th1 (Interferon gamma; IFN $\gamma$ ), Th2 (Interleukin 10; IL10), and pro-inflammatory cytokines (Tumor Necrosis Factor alpha; TNF $\alpha$ ). A novel koala-specific IL17A qRT-PCR assay was also developed as part of this study to quantitate the gene expression of this Th17 cytokine in koalas.

A statistically significant higher IL17A gene expression was observed in animals with current chlamydial disease compared to animals with asymptomatic chlamydial infection. A modest up-regulation of pro-inflammatory cytokines, such as TNF $\alpha$  and IFN $\gamma$ , was also observed in these animals with signs of current chlamydial disease. IL10 gene expression was not evident in the majority of animals from both groups.

Future longitudinal studies are now required to confirm the role played by cytokines in pathology and/or protection against *C. pecorum* infection in the koala.

### Koala Chlamydia vaccine work is progressing well:

The team's research to develop an effective vaccine for chlamydial disease in

koalas is progressing very well, with the current field trial showing promising results. A small trial to evaluate the vaccine in koalas coming in to the FoK Care Centre commenced at the end of August. A very exciting time\*.

### 2014 Australian Chlamydia Conference:

Plans for the Conference to be held on the Sunshine Coast on Wednesday 26 and Thursday 27 November 2014 are progressing well. Sessions 5 & 6 on Thursday morning will be devoted to chlamydial infections and koala health.

### Professor Peter Timms

Professor of Microbiology, Faculty of Science, Health, Education & Engineering, University of the Sunshine Coast, Locked Bag 4, Maroochydore DC, Queensland, 4558 Australia.

Email: [ptimms@usc.edu.au](mailto:ptimms@usc.edu.au)

Web: <http://www.usc.edu.au>

\*Editor's note: Friends of the Koala's first koala in the trial, *Cato*, a 4 year old male, was brought in from Fawcetts Plains Road north of Kyogle with mild bi-lateral conjunctivitis. Vet Ray Austin of Lismore's Keen Street Veterinary Clinic, who has been briefed by members of the research team, applied the

vaccine and will collect samples and monitor the disease progression over the next three months.

Although still very early days, moving from reactive management of Chlamydia to a preventative approach will, we trust, provide a much brighter future for our koalas which are acknowledged to have among the highest levels of chlamydial infection and disease.



Ray Austin applying the vaccine

## KIDReg News

Former PhD student Quintin Lau has recently published a preliminary study of immune (MHCII) genes associated with disease in koalas from the Port Macquarie area.

The study utilised samples and clinical records previously collected by former PhD student Dr. Joanna Griffith and the staff and volunteers at the Port Koala Hospital. The study found that specific MHCII gene variants were associated

with different aspects of chlamydial disease, showing that the interaction between koala host genetic factors and the chlamydial disease is complex, and providing a springboard for future focused studies.

Quintin Lau, Joanna E. Griffith, Damien P. Higgins; **Identification of MHCII variants associated with chlamydial disease in the koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*)** PeerJ 2:e443  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.7717/peerj.443>

Iona Maher is in the second session of testing the immune response of captive

koalas infected with a newly identified strain of Koala retrovirus. Only two more seasons until this project examining the influence of Koala retrovirus on disease susceptibility of koalas is complete. We are all very excited to see her outcomes.

Caroline Marschner recently established the methods to investigate the Eucalyptus plant toxin composition of koala diets to detect inter-population differences in the exposure to those plant toxins.

## Koalas on Campus

Friends of the Koala's association with Southern Cross University stretches back over 20 years. If it had not been for the championing of the University's principal wildlife ecologist of the day, Prof Peter Baverstock, the Koala Care Centre may never have been built, much less located adjacent to the campus.

The University's 75 ha Lismore campus is a very special place, right in the heart of the city. The glimpse that can be imagined of the days of the intact Big Scrub rainforest with its associated drier ridges and wetlands was remarked on in the introduction to the Vegetation Survey undertaken by Landmark Ecological Services Pty Ltd, in late 2012.

Isolated old-growth trees and forest patches of natural koala habitat, mixed with other native species and weeds have now been supplemented with more than 350 food trees planted around the buildings; even more have been planted further afield. The Landmark survey goes on to say, "Koala tree plantings are relatively young and will provide a massive food resource as they mature. The iconic animals will increasingly delight staff and students as well as contributing to recovery." pp.5-6

The campus plays a pivotal role in the East Lismore koala corridor. The Koala Care Centre's location within it is highly valued. But there are other advantages as well. Of particular importance is the mutually beneficial relationship that has developed with the School of Environmental Science and Resource Management around the locality's free-ranging koala population. This population and its habitat have provided topics for several third-year integrated projects which students must complete for their Bachelor of Environmental Science degree.

Over the past few years there has been an impressive spate of projects dealing with koalas on and around the Lismore campus. The latest is Josh McKenna's *Monitoring the Koala (Phascolarctos cinereus) Population on the Southern Cross University Lismore Campus, New South Wales, 2014*.

Josh's study built on surveys undertaken over the past three years of the size and health of the campus sub-population. He and his team surveyed for six weeks over March and April. They saw between 6 and 11 koalas each day and night. Almost a third of the animals showed chlamydial symptoms. No mothers with joeys were observed and only two juveniles. Numbers had dropped significantly from earlier surveys (close to half from the preced-

ing year); "favourable browsing trees are now commonly unoccupied".

Josh's management recommendations include regular, extended monitoring; enhanced connectivity (both vegetation and movement assisting devices) to overcome the barriers of surrounding busy roads and perhaps investigation of any impact noise might play in koala welfare.

Southern Cross is presently engaged in a master planning process across all its campuses. Located in urban Lismore any re-development of the Lismore campus would need to comply with the Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management for South-East Lismore (CKPoM). However the University also has the choice of developing its own Koala Plan of Management.

In our view it's vital that the future development of the Lismore campus is koala-friendly. The apparent decline in koala presence and the high incident of disease documented in student studies over a short period of time suggests that assertive management will be required if koalas are to remain a feature of campus life.

—Lorraine Vass

### DAIRY AND CATTLE FARMERS WANTED FOR LAND RESTORATION

*Lucy Kinsley and Scott McKinnon are koala lovers and cattle farmers – and they have discovered the two go happily hand in hand.*

Around 12 months ago Lucy and Scott fenced off almost 900m of riverbank, the entire length of their 140-acre Wyrallah property, and planted more than 1000 koala food trees. They received a grant through Council for assistance with weed removal and tree planting.

A year later they have opened the gates and 100-head of cattle graze amongst the growing gums, which Lucy said are now twice her height. She has also been eradicating Indian coral in the last 12 months and has a flourishing native forest taking hold.

"The trees just bloomed; they are so tall already," Lucy said. "We've put the cattle in there and they don't damage the trees at all; they just eat the grass.

"Our banks went under three times in the last flood and we lost a whole chunk of riverbank. It will be interesting to see how much erosion control the trees provide next time it floods."

Lucy is now a member of the Koala Implementation Group, which is overseeing key on-ground works from the Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management for south-east Lismore. A central element of the plan is to sign up rural landholders who are willing to undertake restoration works.

Through grant funding, Council can employ bush regenerators to remove weeds, plant trees and install fencing on private property. Council will work with rural landholders to identify suitable areas for planting, ensuring no agricultural activities or industry is constrained.



In Lucy and Scott's neck of the woods, two neighbours are now taking part in the program and have planted trees on their riverbanks, providing connectivity for local koalas moving around the area.

Lucy and Scott have also provided space on the property for Friends of the Koala to grow a plantation of koala food trees, which they can harvest for animals convalescing in the Koala Care Centre.

"We have a really large collection of koalas out our way and all these new trees are great for them," Lucy said. "We saw our first baby koala come out of the pouch just a few weeks ago. He was only as big as my hand; it was beautiful."

**Council is urging farmers and rural landholders to join our landholder register for when grant funding becomes available. To sign up, phone 1300 87 83 87.**

Reproduced from Local Matters. Lismore City Council News, Issue 14, 23 July 2014

## Looking back ...

*Koala protection and preservation has a long history around Lismore and particularly at Tuckurimba where locals had watched over their koala colony for the better part of the 1900s. We reported on their activity back in 2003 courtesy of Ray Hunt*

*More recently a family history by the late Jim Ormond of Coraki (with Penny Davis) entitled *The Gun: The Life of Jim Ormond* gives us more information about the Tucki Tuckurimba Koala Preservation Society's devotion to the koalas and their ground-breaking investment in habitat enhancement. The koala population had been estimated at about 35 bears in the 1940s. By the end of the 1960s that number had grown to 145 koalas. In Chapter 12 (pp.91-93) Jim tells us in his own words about his involvement:*

### **Saving Tuckurimba's Koalas – The Tucki Tuckurimba Koala Preservation Society**

During the 1950s I became involved in helping save Tuckurimba's koalas. When we first moved to Tuckurimba there was a large population of koalas in the area, centred around a stand of old growth trees between the Tuckurimba Post Office and the nearby Tucki school. The koalas had started to defoliate the trees because of overgrazing and it soon became obvious that if something wasn't done the koalas would starve or leave.

Around the same time a fire went through the neighbourhood. My friend George Hunt rescued a koala that had been badly burnt and it was subsequently sent to Taronga Zoo in Sydney for treatment. At that time Sir Edward Hallstrom, who had invented kerosene fridges, was patron of Taronga Zoo. He took a great deal of interest in this injured koala and as a result it received a lot of publicity in the Sydney papers, with photos of the koala taken by George appearing in the news. This drew attention to the plight of koalas on the far north coast and the fact they were running out of trees and food. (As an aside, George was renowned for his wildlife photography. He came second in an international competition conducted by the American Saturday Evening Post with a photo of a koala holding a stick to his mouth. He called the photo "The Flautist".)

Because of the publicity around the injured koala the Lismore Rotary Club, under the President Bill Royce, called a public meeting to

discuss the plight of the koalas. The local community responded enthusiastically and formed the Tucki Tuckurimba Koala Preservation Society. Hamilton McCaughey was elected Chairman, Mrs Johnson was Secretary and I was elected Treasurer, with other society members including local farmers. This was around 1957.

The Department of Education donated two acres of land beside the Tucki School to be used for planting trees to feed the koalas. I was part of a delegation that went to Lone Pine Sanctuary in Brisbane and Fleay's Zoo on the Gold Coast, where we received valuable advice on what type of trees to plant. We decided on five suitable species: flooded gums, tallowwood, forest red gum, swamp mahogany and blackbutt. The Department of Forestry nursery at Roseberry, near Kyogle, was able to supply us with the trees we needed.

The Society then organised a big working bee for our two acres of land. The Committee members and all the local farmers, women and children turned out in force to help. One of the earth moving firms in Lismore came out with bulldozers and cleared the land of trees and big rocks. Then all the volunteers planted the trees we had been given.

The trees grew well, but when they got to about two metres tall the koalas started to break their trunks by bending them over to feed off the leaves. At that time it was also thought that young gum leaves were harmful for koalas. So we decided to fence off the area until the trees had reached a reasonable height.

The Fauna Protection Board, which was led by Mr Hallstrom, gave us a great deal of financial help to construct the fence.

About two years later a local farmer and a Society member, John Scott, donated a further two acres of land to establish another sanctuary. We were very grateful and organised more working bees to clear and plant the land.

After our initial planting I started to collect seed from the gum trees and learnt how to grow them. It was quite difficult at first. I had a special box which I would fill full of peat moss. I would sprinkle the seeds on top and cover them with sand and peat moss. I would then cover this with a porous bag and spray it with water every day. The seeds would sprout after about five days, and when they had four leaves I would transfer them to pots. After about a month I would give the seedlings to local farmers who would grow them as windbreaks and to give koalas extra habitat. My trees are still growing to this day.

Every year we used to count the koalas within a three-mile radius of our sanctuaries. I remember the last count was in 1968 or 1969; we counted 145 koalas, including 15 baby koalas, so our work was a great success.

In around 1968 or 1969 the NSW Parks and Wildlife Service took over management of the reserves we had planted. This meant the Tucki Tuckurimba Koala Preservation Society was no longer needed and so we disbanded. But several years later further extensions to the Tucki sanctuary were granted so I went to the working bees to help plant the trees. NSW Parks and Wildlife continue to manage the reserves and have made a number of improvements, such as building paths so people can walk through the area.

I am really proud of my achievements as a member of the Tucki Tuckurimba Koala Preservation Society. I think we really saved a lot of koalas and I also always liked growing trees. This kind of community action was also unusual at the time. It was really the beginning of environmental awareness when people started to see the importance of preserving native trees and animals. We always got good publicity in the paper about what we were doing.

*Editor's note:* Many thanks to Maria Mathes, Jim's second cousin who shared this chapter with us.



## Koalas, Dogs and the Companion Animals Act

**R**eported dog attacks have fallen across the Northern Rivers in recent years. Of those that still occur most result in koala mortality. Dog owners generally manage their dogs responsibly however there is good scientific evidence that the presence of dogs over time does impact on koala activity, driving them away to fringing areas.



We've asked Nina Lucas of the Environmental Defender's Office to outline the responsibilities, penalties and rights provided by the Companion Animals Act in regard to dogs and koalas to update an article that first appeared in Treetops, December, 2010.

Injury or death from dogs is an identified threat to the survival of the koala. In fact, most dog attacks are fatal, making dog attacks the third most common cause of koala deaths after disease and vehicle strikes. Dogs are 'companion animals' under the Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) ("the Act") (even if the dog is not strictly a 'companion'). The Act is the key NSW law about responsible care and management of companion animals and provides for the regulation of all dogs, whether wild or domesticated.

The Act reflects a community view that while people have a right to own a dog as a pet, this ownership brings with it responsibilities to ensure the benefits of ownership are not outweighed by the costs imposed on the environment and community. The Act states that *the protection of native birds and animals is an objective of animal welfare policy in the State*. To this extent the Act can be used to prevent dogs from injuring or killing koalas through enforcing the provisions that require dog owners to take responsibility at all times for their dogs and penalising them when they don't. Local Councils are empowered to enforce this law.

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### Dog Offences

Under the Act it is illegal for a dog to rush at, attack, bite, harass or chase any animal (other than vermin which is defined to mean small pests only, such as rodents), whether or not any injury is actually caused to the animal. The owner

or person in charge of the dog may be fined up to \$5,500 for an offence.

Like all regulatory matters, in making a complaint to council about a dog incident, evidence of the event is necessary. It is essential that the person making the complaint saw the event and has a clear recollection of it. Writing down exactly what was seen as soon possible after the event is very beneficial. It is important to note details such as a description of the dog, the time, date and exact location of the event. Any evidence such as photos or video of the event is very useful and any corroborative evidence such as another witness may prove valuable.

### Nuisance Dogs

Where a dog has endangered the health of an animal (other than vermin and where the dog was not droving, tending, working or protecting stock) a council officer may issue the dog's owner with a 'nuisance dog order'. This order may require the owner to prevent the behaviour of the dog that constitutes the nuisance, such as through fencing and keeping the dog on a lead. A nuisance dog order applies for a period of six months and if the owner does not comply with the order then further penalties of up to \$880 can be incurred for a first offence and up to \$1,650 for subsequent offences.

### Dangerous or Menacing Dogs

Where a dog has, without provocation, killed, attacked, repeatedly threatened, repeatedly chased, or displayed unreasonable aggression towards another animal (other than vermin), or is a hunting dog a council officer can issue a 'dangerous dog' or 'menacing dog' declaration. A dog may also be declared menacing if it is of a particular breed or kind of dog. This type of declaration exposes a dog owner to significant fines and onerous responsibilities in relation to controlling the dog. Control orders include that the dog must be de-sexed, kept in an approved enclosure, on a lead and muzzled at all times outside of the enclosure, wear a prescribed collar and only ever be in the control of a person over 18. Failure to comply with the control requirements can incur a hefty fine of up to \$16,500. If a dangerous or menacing dog commits a dog offence (described above) and the incident occurs as a result of the owner's failure to comply with the control requirements, the maximum penalty is \$55,000 and/or imprisonment, as well as permanent disqualification from owning a dog.

### Direct Action

Perhaps most significantly under the Act, any person may seize, injure or destroy a dog (in a manner that causes it

to die quickly and without unnecessary suffering) if that action is reasonable and necessary for the protection of any animal (other than vermin) from injury or death. An exception to this is where the dog is engaged in the droving, tending, working or protection of stock. Where such action is taken by a person he or she must take reasonable steps to ensure that an injured dog receives any necessary treatment, report the matter to a council officer and comply with any reasonable directions given in relation to returning the dog to the owner or taking the dog to the council pound. Reasonable steps must be taken to inform the owner of the dog.

Reporting dog incidents in wildlife protection areas to council may also lead to action against the dog. Council officers who find a dog attacking or harassing an animal (other than vermin) in a wildlife protection area are authorised to injure or destroy the dog if there is no other reasonable practicable way of protecting the animal.

### Limitation of the Act

The Act is fundamentally limited in its application to koalas as it is reactionary in nature, meaning that the Act is only triggered once some undesired act toward a koala occurs. However, while the Act is a far-from-perfect tool for dealing with dogs and koalas it may be used to prevent dog-inflicted death or serious injury to koalas in certain circumstances. In particular, the provisions that make owners responsible for their dogs may be enforced where there is evidence of non-compliance with such provisions. If you are in doubt about a dog's behaviour or a dog owner's behavior, talk to your local council or EDO NSW.

—Nina Lucas  
Outreach Solicitor  
EDO NSW, Northern Rivers  
Free call: 1800 626 239



Nimbin Garden Clubbers helping out at the FOK plant nursery (see opposite page)

## Tree Officer's Report

### Koala Habitat Restoration Project (LCC & EnviTE):

The final plantings for this project are planned to be completed over the period September to November. EnviTE have ordered 1,200 trees from the nursery for the plantings.

### Nursery News:

We have been very busy in the nursery. I now have 6 regular workers each week. Nursery space is full and there are 3,000 plants at the SCU Nursery. Happily I have secured extra space at the EnviTE nursery (behind the Lismore Crematorium) that has an additional capacity of up to 10-15,000 plants. I have offered to contribute to the cost of water but I doubt that this will be taken up by EnviTE.

### Grants:

Tregeagle Landcare has received another grant, this time from Landcare Australia, to the value of \$25,000 for a project entitled 'Koalas in Tree Tops'. The project is to be completed by 30/6/15 and involves strategic work in riparian areas of Tucki Tucki Creek and Boggy Creek to improve native vegetation to enhance/create koala corridors. I participated in landholder site visits on 13<sup>th</sup> August.

We were unsuccessful in our grant application titled 'Koala Habitat Restoration - extending planting and bush regeneration in Lismore LGA' from Perpetual Philanthropic Services for a continuation of one of the existing grants being administered by EnviTE.

### Lismore Car Boot Market:

The Car Boot Market stalls continue to provide good sales income even though we have entered the winter season that is traditionally slow for plantings and garden activities. The last 2 markets netted \$567 and \$410. We are Charity of the Day at the September 21<sup>st</sup> market.

### Q Arts, Craft & Garden Fair:

Our presence at the 2-day fair over the weekend of 30-31 August grossed \$685 in plant sales and provided welcome opportunity to promote our work.

### Visit by Nimbin Garden Club:

I hosted a visit by the Nimbin Garden Club to the nursery on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> July. Around 20 people (and 1 Rooster!) attended and assisted with weeding, repotting tubestock and planting seeds. I then gave them a guided tour and talk about koalas. I was very pleased to receive a donation cheque for \$150 from the Club. They said they want to make it an annual event.

—Mark Wilson

## FOK's Green Army

The Hon Greg Hunt MP, Minister for the Environment, has advised that we have been successful with our application to sponsor two Green Army teams in 2015.

Our project will be among the first to be rolled out under this major new initiative. The Green Army Programme will support environment and heritage outcomes and provide young Australians with opportunities to develop skills, undertake training and gain experience in the delivery of conservation projects.

The Green Army is part of the Government's \$2 billion investment in the management of natural resources and heritage, enabling communities to take practical action to improve their local environment. Importantly, it will complement and support the efforts of local communities, volunteers and Landcare groups.

Green Army teams of ten (up to nine participants and one team supervisor) will be deployed to projects lasting 20-26 weeks to help communities deliver local conservation outcomes.

Projects will be guided by local community needs and contribute to Australia's national and international environmental priorities and obligations.

Participants will receive an allowance and will work six hour days, five days per week.

Friends of the Koala's Green Army team will work alongside members in the plant nursery to produce koala preferred food trees. These trees will be available to the public who wish to expand koala habitat on their properties and provide a consistent supply for other projects aimed at increasing habitat connectivity for koalas.

The team will also control weeds and plant 3,500 trees on the Southern Cross University campus and on private land. A variety of tree guards will be used to protect plantings from browsers. The effectiveness of the guards will be recorded with results collated and used to plan future plantings. The team will assist in the distribution of trees to the community and will participate in community education events.

We envisage that the team will be able to play a vital role in monitoring koala populations on the Southern Cross University campus. Seasonal monitoring will be undertaken and individual sightings and locations recorded over the twelve month period. The results will be collated and given to SCU for future reference, adding to previous surveys.

## Wilson's River Catchment Education and Restoration Project

Six Lismore schools, Rous Water, Friends of the Koala, Lismore City Council, WIRES, Southern Cross University, Tucki Landcare, Banyam Baigham Landcare, Wilson River Landcare and Dorrroughby Environment Education Centre are partnering in this exciting three-year project which is involving school students in a diverse range of catchment activities, including water quality testing, local catchment issues, biodiversity, threatened species, weeds, bush regeneration and waste education.

The participating schools are Albert Park Public School in East Lismore, Richmond River High School in North Lismore, St Carthage's Primary School and Trinity College north of the Lismore CBD, St John's College, Woodlawn and Kadina High School in Goonellabah.

Each school is linked to a nominated site of Wilsons River frontage (or, in the case of Kadina High, Tucki Tucki Creek) at which riparian restoration works are being undertaken and an environmental education and planting event staged. Twelve school activity days i.e. two stages at each school) are being held over three years, commencing from August 2012.

Koala education is an important element of the project with a workshop being part of each activity day. Earlier in the year Albert Park Public School's second day was held in March and included participation from Tuntable Creek Primary School. The Richmond River High School's second activity day was held on 5 September.



Mark Wilson with Richmond River High School students

The team was to commence on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014, but we are currently awaiting confirmation of the actual start date.

—Julie Reid

## Advocacy and Policy Reform

As you will have gathered by the tone of my Message, any glimmer of hope we might have held for better outcomes from the Baird Government bringing together into a shared department the planning and environment portfolios, has been dispelled. The business of dismantling NSW's environmental laws continues while the so-called planning reforms are still hidden from public scrutiny.

On the ground, "death by a thousand cuts" prevails. Only a few minutes ago I took a call from a resident at Federal in Byron Shire concerned about allegedly unapproved felling of koala food trees. I have every faith that the Council will investigate, but should the work prove to be unauthorised, the food trees will have come down. Little wonder that we

see the message being sent by Government as further emboldening the brazen.

The Sydney papers have been full of million dollar harbour views being lawfully retaken by chainsaw under the 10/50 Clearing Code. Well they might. Here on the Far North Coast critically endangered littoral rainforest in Fingal Head, Tweed Shire went the same way. This Code which was introduced on 1 August could well impact on other biodiversity values for which Tweed Shire is renowned. The Shire has the highest number of threatened species in Australia including the Tweed Coast's koala population which was estimated at 144 koalas in 2011, a figure which could well be considerably lower these three years later.

Hardly a week goes by when Friends of the Koala is not contacted about tree clearance; just as barely does a week go

by when we're not responding to a development or policy proposal. These activities are part of our core business.

Over the past quarter campaigning focussed on the Highway Upgrade approval decision. We were pleased with the 7.30 Report's coverage that went to air on 25 July and with the continued support given by the regional media. Generous resourcing provided by IFAW was especially welcome.

Other matters we addressed ranged from the level of Lismore Council's resourcing for implementing the CKPoM to a controversial housing development in Goonellabah, and responding to the ill-conceived 10/50 Clearing Code already mentioned, the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Environmental Protection Authority, and the Independent Review of Biodiversity Legislation.

—Lorraine Vass

## Protection in perpetuity for Royal Camp's koalas

The North East Forest Alliance is again calling for the permanent protection of the regionally significant koala population in Royal Camp State Forest (16 km south west of Casino) from the Forestry Corporation.

The present call for action to Environment Minister Rob Stokes follows revelations in documents obtained from the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) under the Government Information (Public Access) Act, confirming the importance of Royal Camp for the survival of Koalas in the Richmond Valley.

As reported last year (*Royal Camp's Koalas* p.10, *Treetops* September 2013), in August 2012 NEFA stopped the Forestry Corporation illegally logging a Koala High Use Area in Royal Camp, with three other koala areas about to be logged. The EPA found that the Forestry Corporation had not adequately looked for koala scats and had logged 61 trees and constructed 405m of snig tracks within a Koala High Use Area.

When the Forestry Corporation resumed logging nearby a few days later NEFA again caught them out. The EPA confirmed that the unrepentant Forestry Corporation had not adequately looked for koala scats and had logged seven

trees and constructed 230m of snig tracks within another Koala High Use Area.

NEFA found that the Forestry Corporation logged another Koala High Use Area before logging stopped sometime later.



Greens MLC David Shoebridge and forest activist Frances Pike at Royal Camp last year

When the Forestry Corporation attempted to resume logging in another part of Royal Camp a year ago, based on a plan that said there were no koalas, NEFA got in ahead of them and found extensive koala use and two more Koala High Use Areas, which the EPA again confirmed.

This time Environment Minister Parker required that an assessment of the koalas' regional significance be undertaken. Dr Steve Phillips conducted the work

which identified a resident koala population in parts of Compartment 13 he assessed regionally significant because of the probable endangerment of koalas in the Richmond Valley Local Government Area (LGA). Dr Phillips is completing a koala habitat assessment and species distribution and abundance survey of parts of Richmond Valley for preparation of a Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management. His report will be presented to Richmond Valley Council soon.

On 1 July 2014 the EPA's Chief Environmental Regulator, Mark Gifford wrote to the Forestry Corporation CEO, Nick Roberts, recommending that no forestry activities occur in Royal Camp State Forest until further regional work commences.

The evidence is over-whelming that compartments 13-16 of Royal Camp State Forest support a core breeding group of Koalas that should be protected from the Forestry Corporation, and other direct threats to their survival, by inclusion in a reserve. NEFA is calling upon Environment Minister Stokes to now take action to ensure permanent protection for Royal Camp's koalas.

—Dailan Pugh



## Bulletin Board

### New Members

A very warm welcome to the following new members who have been formally accepted into Friends of the Koala over recent months:

**Liz Clarke** of Caniaba, **John, Janet, Alexandra & Gabriel Mison** of Eltham, **Sandra Chen, Melva Macaulay, Marie Daymond** and **Megan Moore** of Lismore, **Susanna Broehl, Kayla Gibfried, Kylee Mroz** and **Lily Grubisic** of East Lismore, **Frank Keitel, Deborah Axford** and **Susan Berry**, of Goonellabah, **Elaine Leonard** of Chatsworth, **Simon Lamont** of The Channon, and **Ian Cross** of Rock Valley.

### UQ Tweed Study

Researchers at The University of Queensland are carrying out a study into the use of habitat by koalas between Tweed Valley Way and the Pacific Highway in Tweed Shire.

Honours student Daniel Kelly, is keen to study how koala distribution is related to fine-scale habitat variables such as tree species and structure, and more broad-scale factors such habitat fragmentation and road density.

The Council has been restoring koala habitat on the eastern side of the Highway under the Koala Connections project, but there has been little research into how koalas use habitat on the western side.

Daniel is working with Professor Clive McAlpine and Dr Leonie Seabrook at The University of Queensland and with Scott Hetherington, Senior Program Leader - Biodiversity Community and Natural Resources at Tweed Shire Council.

### Wyrallah Koala signage

The Wyrallah district, south-east of Lismore is well-known for its koalas. Along River Bank Road is a great place for eye-ball contact and they can often be seen in the grounds of Wyrallah Public School.



### Southern Highlands Koala Conservation Project

Wingecarribee Shire Council is encour-

aging residents to report koala sightings and activity to a new 'Koala Hotline' to help build a more detailed picture of their population in the Southern Highlands.

The initiative follows on from a successful joint study Council conducted along with the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) in May 2014. The initial survey included field studies to gauge the size of the koala population in the Southern Highlands, as well as key habitats and feed trees. Following the survey, a community information session was held at Colo Vale Village Hall, attracting more than 50 residents interested in helping with the next stages of the project.

### World Environment Day Award

Friends of the Koala and Brunswick Valley Landcare tied in the Conservation and Land Management Division of Byron Shire Council's 2014 World Environment Day Awards. The Award recognised our outstanding contribution to improving the Shire's environment and sustainability.

tificate of Excellence. The award is based on the number and quality of reviews and opinions earned on Trip Advisor over the past 12 months.

### Farewell

Breaking News – the Dobners are leaving the Northern Rivers to return to Canberra! Barb joined FOK in 2002, soon after the family arrived from Canberra. She was our Care Co-ordinator from 2005 to 2011 and home-cared to the end. Koala and other wildlife caring was a whole-of-family affair for the Dobners. We thank them for all they have done for FOK and the koalas, and wish them well.



Byron, Barbara and Mallory Dobner



Dr. Jo Green (left of Mayor Simon Richardson), Koala Connections Projects Officer was on hand to accept our award

### Southern Sydney's Koalas

In August a meeting of government agencies and Campbelltown, Wollondilly and Wingecarribee councils was held to investigate a joint-agency approach to conserving the southern Sydney koala colony which is coming under ever-increasing development pressure from Mittagong in the south up to Wilton, Appin and Wedderburn.

The Wedderburn population is the largest and best known in the Sydney region. Koalas have survived as well as they have because the O'Hares Creek Catchment is cut off from many aspects of urbanisation by natural boundaries including the Cubbitch Narta National Estate Area, the O'Hares Creek National Estate Area, the Wedderburn State Forest and the Georges River.

### Port's Koala Hospital Tourism Winner

The Port Macquarie Koala Hospital has been awarded a 2014 Trip Advisor Cer-

## Position Vacancies

**Membership Officer**

**Leaf Collection  
Co-ordinator**

**Training Officer**

**Enquiries to President  
Lorraine Vass 6629 8388**



## Member Profile: Loretta Younger

Loretta was introduced to Friends of the Koala through her friend, Lola Whitney. She had visited the Koala Care Centre had seen the very special connection Lola had with Brendan (who was in permanent care at the time). Loretta had also accompanied Lola to the Australian



Wildlife Hospital with Tonga. She made the decision to join at the end of 2010 and a few months later took on the position of Membership Officer.

### What's the best thing about where you live?

The beautiful view from our home, it is good for the soul. Also the people and scenery in this part of the world.

### What are you reading?

Eat, Pray, Love... by Elizabeth Gilbert

### What is your favourite Movie?

Can't say which is my favourite but I really enjoyed "Twins" - starring Danny DeVito and Arnold Schwarzenegger - because of the subtle humour.

### What's your favourite hobby/pastime?

Walking along the beach, particularly in the early morning; looking through Display homes and writing family history stories.

### Your idea of a perfect Sunday?

I attend church on Sundays; dinner when the family is visiting, catching up, lots of laughs and eating our favourite food.

### Your most memorable travel experience?

When I visited America to see my daughter and meet my first grandchild. I also got to travel a little and loved the US. New Zealand was also a memorable experience. I lived and worked there for a year when I was 24. Weekends in Auckland with the girls were a highlight.

### What would you most like to be doing in five year's time?

Spending time with my family/grandchildren and continuing to work on my family history stories. I plan to have at least two books finished by then.

### What has been your favourite koala moment?

When Pat introduced me to Joanna; I was totally captivated.

## Volunteering with FOK

I'm a Wildlife Science student at The University of Queensland which led me to pursue a volunteer placement at Friends of the Koala. After commencing my placement in April 2014, I began to realise how little I knew about koalas. I have gained so much knowledge about these beautiful animals including their physiology and behaviour and the threats that they face in the wild.

I signed up for two shifts per week at FOK where I not only had the opportunity to observe the koalas in care, but got to observe koalas in their natural habitat whilst collecting leaf for our koalas in the mornings. Leaf collection was another highlight of my volunteer work which allowed me to learn about natural koala habitat and the different Eucalypt species. However, after leafing I was always excited to get back to the Care Centre to see how all the koalas were doing.

During my four month placement one special boy stole my heart. His name was Neil and he had the most beautiful personality. Neil was rescued not far from the Care Centre in late April. He was found low in a tree and appeared to be in poor condition. Upon examination by Vet Ray, Neil was diagnosed with Chlamydia although he wasn't showing any clinical signs of the disease. Ray aged Neil as approximately 9 years old, which is quite old for a male koala. Nevertheless we were keen to nurse Neil back to health with the intention of releasing him back into the wild as soon as possible.

During Neil's treatment, he received lots of 'bum washes', pain relief and close monitoring. Our preferred Chlamydia drug, Chloramphenicol, was not available on the market for a number of months which was the reason for Neil's long journey with us. However, we finally received the drug a number of weeks ago and Neil's treatment began straight away. His antibiotic treatment was to continue for 28 days and we were hoping to release him as soon as we got the all-clear from Vet Ray.

Sadly, we lost our Neil on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> August as a result of weight loss and poor condition in the weeks prior to his death. He will be dearly missed and will forever hold a place in our hearts. He was a special boy who I will never forget and it really reinforced for me why we give up our time for these beautiful animals. We did everything we could

for Neil, but unfortunately we cannot save them all.

There is a high incidence of Chlamydia in the koala population in the Lismore area which is particularly concerning because they are also prone to car hits and dog attacks. Therefore, it is important that the community supports FOK in any way possible, whether it be volunteering, donations, or educating peers about the ways in which we can reduce the threats to koalas. By driving with extra caution in koala areas and keeping our pet dogs under control, we can contribute to the survival of this species.



Volunteering at FOK has been an amazing experience and I have been lucky enough to receive

training from some of the most experienced people in the industry. After graduating Uni in November this year, I hope to see all the FOK team again!

—Tami O'Neil

## Dates for your Diary

**21 September: Friends of the Koala Charity of the Day & Stall**, 7amish to 2pmish, Lismore Carboot Market

**27 September: Friends of the Koala Management Committee Meeting**, Room P160 Southern Cross University, 2pm

**30 September: Deadline for late 2014-2015 Friends of the Koala Membership Renewal** (see Renewal Form: p.15)

**4 October: North Coast Environment Council Annual General Meeting**, Room 1, Coffs Harbour Community Centre, Earle St, Coffs Harbour, 10:30 am to 4 pm

**19 October: Friends of the Koala Stall**, 7amish to 2pmish, Lismore Carboot Market

**1-2 November: Nature Conservation Council of NSW's 2014 Annual Conference**, Law Foyer, University of Sydney

**7-17 November: The Great [NSW] Koala Count**

**22 November: Friends of the Koala Management Committee Meeting**, Southern Cross University, 2pm

**25 November: NSW Wildlife Council 34th General Meeting**, OEH Hurstville

**27 November: 2014 Australian Chlamydia Conference [Koalas]**: University of the Sunshine Coast, 9am to 1pm  
**Contributions due for Treetops (December issue)**

<b>Application/renewal form — ‘Friends of the Koala, Inc.’ Membership runs from 1st July to 30th June.</b>		<b>I/We are interested in:</b> (please tick)
Name.....		<input type="checkbox"/> Tree Planting
Postal address.....		<input type="checkbox"/> Plant Nursery work
City/Suburb.....	Postcode.....Country.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Caring for sick & injured koalas
Phone.....	Mobile.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Leaf collection
Email.....		<input type="checkbox"/> Rescue
Membership category (please tick)		<input type="checkbox"/> Committee / Administration
<input type="checkbox"/> Ordinary—Individual/Family (within Australia) ..... \$20		<input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising
<input type="checkbox"/> Concession—Full time Student/Pensioner (within Australia)..... \$10		<input type="checkbox"/> Publicity
<input type="checkbox"/> International—Individual/Family (outside Australia) ..... \$50		<input type="checkbox"/> Education
I/We would like to make an additional donation of : \$.....		<input type="checkbox"/> Surveys / Mapping
<b>Total payment is:</b> \$.....		<input type="checkbox"/> Information Technology
		<input type="checkbox"/> Phone Roster
		<input type="checkbox"/> I/We would like someone to phone and explain about volunteering with Friends of the Koala

**Payment by:**

Direct Debit (your name as reference) to: Friends of the Koala Inc., BSB 722-744  
A/C 38533 Southern Cross Credit Union Ltd.

or  Cash (**preferred**)       Cheque       Money order

Credit card (**amounts over \$20**)      Cardholder Name.....

Card Type (e.g. Visa).....Number.....Expiry Date (mm/yy)...../.....

**Post to:** *The Treasurer, Friends of the Koala Inc., PO Box 5034, East Lismore, NSW 2480*

*I agree to abide by the licensing requirements, the constitution and the policies of ‘Friends of the Koala’ Inc.*

Signature.....Date...../...../.....

*The Management Committee reserves the right to refuse any application for membership or renewal.*

- Please tick here if a receipt **is** required
- Please tick here if you would like to receive Treetops by email (~ 2 mb pdf colour file)

**Office Use Only**

Date Received.....Receipt #.....Donation Receipt #.....Date Passed by Committee.....

**Contact Information:** 24 hr Rescue Hotline: **6622 1233** Koala Care Centre: **6621 4664**

email: info@friendsofthekoala.org      web: www.friendsofthekoala.org

President	Lorraine Vass	6629 8388	president@friendsofthekoala.org
Vice President	Ros Irwin	6621 5906	roslyn.irwin@gmail.com
Secretary			
Treasurer	Susannah Keogh	0431 707 883	sjkl@inet.net.au
Trees Officer	Mark Wilson	6624 5032	info@friendsofthekoala.org
Care Coordinator	Pat Barnidge	6622 3690	pat.fok@hotmail.com
Care Centre Coordinator	Lola Whitney	6621 3523	lola.fok@hotmail.com
Training Officer			
Leaf Harvesting Coordinator			
Phone Roster Coordinator	Pat Barnidge	6622 3690	pat.fok@hotmail.com

**Volunteers Working For: Koala Rescue and Rehabilitation . Advocacy . Education . Environmental Repair**



**Found injured wildlife in NSW?**  
**Download the Wildlife Rescue App**

IF UNDELIVERABLE RETURN TO:  
'FRIENDS OF THE KOALA' INC  
PO BOX 5034  
EAST LISMORE NSW 2480  
PRINT POST APPROVED  
1100002148

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*Treetops is printed on recycled paper.*



Deadline for next newsletter:  
**Thursday 27 November: 2014**  
Contributions gratefully accepted  
– please post to FOK or email  
**[info@friendsofthekoala.org](mailto:info@friendsofthekoala.org)**

