

## 1. Guiding Principles

Friends of the Koala's core mission statement is: To make a key contribution to Australia's biodiversity by ensuring the conservation of the iconic koala and the preservation and enhancement of koala habitat, particularly in the Northern Rivers Region of New South Wales.

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

This Code of Conduct is to be read by all volunteers, employees and committee members prior to starting work with Friends of the Koala and must be adhered to throughout your involvement with Friends of the Koala in any capacity.

## 2. Summary

Volunteers and employees are required to:

- 2.1 When involved in rescuing koalas, act with the sole intention of rehabilitating and releasing them, consistent with our rehabilitation license from the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and the Environment (DoPIE).
- 2.2 At all times comply with the law, with particular regard to the care and treatment of all animals.
- 2.3 At all times comply with the policies of Friends of the Koala that may change from time to time.
- 2.4 Always act in the best interests of koalas, and without cruelty whether it be by direct action or by neglect.
- 2.5 Act in a friendly, polite, tolerant, professional and supportive manner in order to promote a culture of safety and positive relationships between volunteers, employees, contractors, other organisations and members of the public.
- 2.6 Ensure that safety of volunteers, employees, members of the public and animals is paramount at all times.
- 2.7 Refrain from bullying, discrimination, harassment or defamation.
- 2.8 Act honestly and not misuse the resources of the organisation. Refrain from acts of fraud and deception (whether knowingly or unknowingly) or misrepresent the organisation for one's own gain/advantage.
- 2.9 Sign a *Confidentiality Agreement* at the commencement of their tenure if they are on the Management Committee.
- 2.10 Declare and record any actual or perceived conflict of interest if attending meetings or being part of decision-making processes.
- 2.11 Abide by Friends of the Koala's policy on social media.

## 3. Care of Koalas

- 3.1 All volunteers and employees are required to read and abide by the terms of Friends of the Koala's rehabilitation license and NPSW's *Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Koalas*.

- 3.2 Koalas that come into care must be assessed for rehabilitation and release and treated in the best way to minimise suffering.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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 volunteer to improve their care practices. An incident can be reported to the Vet and/or Vet Nurse. Serious instances, such as neglect or mistreatment, should be reported to the Committee through the Care & Rescue Coordinator.
- 3.5 All details of a koala's care and fate must be reported using the standard FOK Koala Record Sheet. As well as for statistical purposes, these details allow us to build an understanding of emerging threats to koalas, such as problem areas for road kill and effective rehabilitation treatments.
- 3.6 Friends of the Koala provides training for new and current volunteers. Induction and signing of the Volunteer Agreement is a requirement for all volunteers and needs to be completed before commencing volunteer work. Volunteer Carers must undergo basic koala care training and undertake approved refresher courses every three years.

## 4. Relationship with others

- 4.1 Professional standards of behaviour are required by all volunteers and employees must comply with reasonable directions given by someone in Friends of the Koala who has authority to give directions including the Management Committee, Vet, Vet Nurse, Coordinators, Shift Supervisors and the Operations and Communications Manager within their respective areas of authority.
- 4.2 Discrimination, bullying or harassment, physical or verbal intimidation or behaviour that undermines other people, Friends of the Koala itself or other organisations, such as negative comments on social media or in meetings, or to other volunteers or employees or consultants of Friends of the Koala, will not be tolerated.
- 4.3 Defamation of each other, employees, consultants, partners, government workers such as council staff and organisations including Friends of the Koala itself will not be tolerated either. Defamation refers to something said or written by one person which negatively affects the reputation of another person, and that thing said or written is not true or is unsubstantiated. It can be, for example, in the form of a photograph or a newspaper article, it could be distributed over the internet, or it could simply be words used to defame a person orally without a written record. Volunteers are entitled to their private views but are not to express personally destructive or intimidating comments in any public forum or within the organisation.
- 4.4 Breaches of Friends of the Koala's policies, including this Code of Conduct, should be reported to one of the following: Volunteer Coordinator; Grievance Officer; the President or the Management Committee as appropriate. Volunteers and employees 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 Management Committee, together with a Grievance Officer, will be responsible for investigating the situation and determining an appropriate response.
- 4.5 The Management Committee may undertake disciplinary action against volunteers or employees if the complaint or incident is upheld. Repeated or serious offences can result in a volunteer being expelled from the organisation. (*Refer to Constitution Section 17*)
- 4.6 Friends of the Koala is obliged to report any volunteer, employee or member who is suspected of criminal actions to NSW Police, particularly with regard to animal cruelty, assault or fraud.
- 4.7 Volunteers 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 volunteer closely associated with those charged, or present when animal cruelty offences occurred, may also have restrictions placed on their membership.

## **5. Relationship with members of the public**

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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 or fridge magnet, to rescues.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 In cases of suspected or proven intentional cruelty, it is advisable for the rescuer to call the relevant authority e.g. NSW Police, Lismore City Council or RSPCA and then report this matter to the Management Committee.

## **6. Public Relations and Educational Activities**

- 6.1 Volunteers and employees will only make public statements on behalf of Friends of the Koala if delegated to do so by the Committee.
- 6.2 Volunteers and employees 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.
- 6.3 Educational activities, such as visits to community groups or schools or attendance at markets, should be made in compliance with our Code of Conduct.
- 6.4 If permission has been given for the use of koalas in permanent care for educational purposes, carers must never put the animals in positions of stress, and volunteers should be aware of, and follow, FOK's guidelines.
- 6.5 Koalas undergoing rehabilitation should not be used in educational activities.

## **7. 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, Northern Tableland Wildlife Carers, Team Koala, Bangalow Koalas, the Keen Street Veterinary Clinic and Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, as well as IFAW and WWF. These relationships are extremely valuable and allow us to provide the best care for koalas across the Northern Rivers Region. Volunteers and employees 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.

## **8. Confidentiality**

All 'in confidence' matters must be treated as such. Volunteers and employees 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 Management Committee. All Management Committee members are to sign a confidentiality agreement

## 9. The Management Committee

We welcome everyone’s input into this multi-faceted organisation. The Management Committee comprises a group of volunteers who aim to do their best for the organisation taking into account the many partners we have and government legislation we need to adhere to. If you have any suggestions to improve the organisation and/or our work with koalas, please talk to your supervisor or fill in the suggestion book located in Burrubi. The Management Committee meets every two months and our AGM is traditionally held in October.

## 10. Changes to our Code of Conduct Policy

This policy may change from time to time as new features are added, or as laws change that may affect our volunteers & employees. Any changes that are made to the Code of Conduct policy, will be reflected on this page. The revised policy will be printed and either put up on our volunteer noticeboard or in our policies folder. We encourage you to periodically reread this policy, to see if there have been any changes that may affect you.

### Approval and Version Control

Version Control	Date Effective	Approved By	Amendment
1.0	UNK	Committee	Policy created
2.0	July 2020	Committee	Policy reviewed