



FRIENDS  
OF THE  
KOALA

# Friends of the Koala Annual Report FY 2024-2025

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## Acknowledgement of Country

Friends of the Koala acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Bundjalung Country.

We recognise their enduring connection to this land, water and communities.

We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present.

Our work is guided by their wisdom in sustainable stewardship and respect for all creatures particularly the koala.

We are humbled to contribute to this legacy, recognising that this land always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

# About us

## **We have one goal: to save koalas from extinction!**

For nearly 40 years, Friends of the Koala (FoK) has been on the frontline of the battle to save the species.

We are a grassroots organisation with close to four decades of experience working on critical, on-the-ground activities to conserve habitat and protect koalas individually and as a species. We have a deep understanding of the unique challenges faced by koalas in our region.

We are the people that do the work, every single day. We rescue, rehabilitate and release koalas, protect and enhance habitat, assist with and initiate relevant research, educate the community and advocate on the behalf of koalas at a local, state, and national level.

## **We know that if koalas have any chance of surviving in the wild, we need to tackle all the challenges they face.**

With 530 members, 180 active volunteers, and 5.4 FTE staff, we operate the largest Koala Hospital on the East Coast of Australia. We tend to hundreds of sick, injured, and orphaned koalas each year. This is the only specialised Koala Hospital in the Northern Rivers, a region that is home to a significant, genetically diverse koala population.

Our holistic approach makes us especially effective. We tackle challenges facing koalas from all areas – rescue, rehabilitate and release, habitat restoration, disease prevention and management, research, community education and advocacy. With our volunteers contributing over \$2 million dollars of time and dedication, Friends of the Koala keep operational costs extremely low, so your support goes further.

Friends of the Koala are a not-for-profit organisation and registered charity under the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). Revenue earned through membership, donations, nursery, partnerships and merchandise sales, goes directly back into the support, care and conservation of koalas in the Northern Rivers and beyond.

Koalas have never faced more threats as now! Every donation, volunteer support, in-kind donations, education and awareness, brings us one step closer to ensure Australia's national treasure does not become extinct.

Your support isn't just a gift – it's a lifeline. It's the difference between a joey surviving or succumbing. It's the reason a mother koala gets a second chance.

At Friends of the Koala, we are not just rescuing koalas, we are building a future where every koala, joey and eucalyptus tree is safe, thriving, and part of a living legacy. Don't let their story end here!

# Foreword

Reporting for this financial year is a little unusual.

I am writing this as Acting President referring to the 2024–2025 financial year, during which I did not hold this position.

At the December 2024 AGM, Allison Kelly retired as President and Mark Ambrose was elected to the role. Mark subsequently resigned from presidency in September, creating an additional period of transition for the organisation. During the same period, our General Manager, Silva Everaers, commenced maternity leave in January 2025 and formally resigned in June 2025.

Nina Ayalon joined the organisation on a one-year contract beginning in February 2025 and is currently on leave.

As a result of the various changes, some of the reporting in this Annual Report extends beyond the strict financial year timeframe and overlaps into the calendar year.

Our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year provides a meaningful moment to reflect on our journey and set a strong foundation for the years ahead. This milestone allows us to reflect on our long history of rescue, rehabilitation, education, and habitat restoration and protection, while also focusing on the future by nurturing our people, building our facilities, and supporting the dedicated volunteers and staff whose commitment and energy sustain our work. Together, we will continue building a resilient organisation capable of meeting the increasing challenges facing koalas and ensuring the long-term impact of our conservation efforts.

**Rhonda James**  
**Acting President**

# Patron's Message

Having stepped down mid-way through the reporting year, at the AGM held on 18 December 2024, this is my 8<sup>th</sup> and concluding message to you as Friends of the Koala's Patron. 2024-2025 has been a harrowing year for our organisation and members, particularly those who are active volunteers, whether co-ordinators, team-leaders, team members, or office-bearers and members of the management committee.

Despite conscientious preparation way back in 2016, transitioning our grassroots volunteer band to a small business whose workforce comprises paid staff and a very large volunteer component, has not been easy. Sadly, tensions intensified during the year.

In an organisation as old and resilient as Friends of the Koala dealing with change is ongoing. I am told that back in the late '80s when the idea of the group expanding into koala rescue and rehabilitation took hold, some members did not support the idea and walked away. Over time it was acknowledged that the animal welfare function actually complemented the group's original habitat and advocacy focus. The organisation not only survived but thrived, to the extent that the leadership team soon committed to establishing a central care facility, moving away from home-care. Again, some welcomed the development and others didn't.

The challenge of managing change has been a priority for the in-coming Management Committee and new General Manager. Yes, some long-serving and experienced volunteers have left but others, in good faith and with good will, have stepped up to the task of developing solutions that will ultimately strengthen Friends of the Koala. Identifying and capitalising on the opportunities provided by challenges is the trick.

Of critical importance to the broader wildlife rehabilitation and associated veterinary sector has been the announcement by the NSW Government of a review led by Ms Trish Doyle MP, Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment. The sector is large and diverse, comprising forty providers, six of which operate a wildlife hospital. Three of them are located in the Northern Rivers: our own specialist koala hospital, Northern Rivers Wildlife Hospital in Wollongbar and Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital in Lennox Head.

A discussion paper was released in September 2024 and submissions sought. Regional roundtables and site visits followed in March. The report is expected to be submitted to the Minister at the end of October 2025. We're hopeful the recommendations, and ultimately Government action, will substantially improve support to and resourcing of the sector. We should never forget that Friends of the Koala is built on the passion and commitment of the hundreds, if not thousands of ordinary community members who have gone before us. Our organisation enables us to work collectively, harnessing our particular interests and strengths, to assist koala survival in the Northern Rivers in a very material way. In our 39<sup>th</sup> year we continue to give the Koala a voice, and we remain a force to be reckoned with in protecting and nurturing their well-being.

Finally, a word on Hon. Life Member and Past President, Ros Irwin who died on 16 June 2025. Over the fifteen years of her membership Ros served Friends of the Koala in numerous capacities. Elected to the Management Committee in 2012 she became Vice President in 2014 and President in 2017 while continuing the rescuing, Hotlining and leafing responsibilities common to most active volunteers in those days. Rest peacefully Ros. May your mighty contribution be remembered with respect and affection.



**Lorraine Vass AM**

# General Manager's Message

As I reflect on my time with Friends of the Koala, I am filled with gratitude for the remarkable community that makes this organisation's vital work possible.

After nearly three and a half years with FoK – the first six months as a volunteer management committee member and later as General Manger – I made the decision to step down from my role as I welcome a new addition to my family.

Working for Friends of the Koala has been an extraordinary privilege. Together, we have achieved meaningful outcomes for koalas, both in our daily rescue and rehabilitation efforts and through our longer-term conservation initiatives. None of this would be possible without the dedication of our volunteers, the generosity of our donors, and the commitment of our partners.

To our volunteers: Your passion and tireless commitment inspired me every day. Whether you're caring for koalas, responding to calls, or supporting our operations behind the scenes, you are the heart of this organisation. The countless hours you give, often unseen, make all the difference.

To our donors and partners: Your support enables us to continue our critical mission. Your belief in our work and your investment in koala conservation provides the foundation upon which everything else is built. Thank you for standing with us.

To the committee members who served during my tenure: Your support, trust, and appreciation – particularly during challenging times – meant more than you know. Working alongside such dedicated individuals has been a highlight of my time at FoK.

I have learned immeasurably from this experience and from all of you.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to such important and impactful work. I wish Friends of the Koala continued success in safeguarding our precious koalas for generations to come.



**Silva Everaers**  
**General Manager**

# Finance Report – FY2025

## Introduction

This year has been one of the most challenging financial periods for wildlife and conservation organisations, including Friends of the Koala (FoK). Koala funding across Australia has tightened, several long-term partners have concluded their support, and the post-bushfire wave of government and philanthropic investment has now largely tapered off.

At the same time, the demand for specialised hospital care, rehabilitation and habitat protection continues to rise, with koalas presenting with more complex illnesses and injuries requiring intensive clinical support. These pressures have created a widening funding gap that organisations like ours must work harder than ever to manage.

Against this backdrop, FY2025 was a year of disciplined cashflow management, careful prioritisation and continued investment in the core services that define our mission: rescue, rehabilitate and release koalas across the Northern Rivers.

Despite the financial pressures facing the wildlife sector, FOK remained focused, resilient and committed to continuing to deliver high-impact frontline work under immense pressure.

## Overview of Financial Performance

	FY24/25	FY23/24
Revenue	\$1,675,550	\$1,454,280
Expenses	\$1,447,655	\$1,529,031
Net Surplus/Deficit Before Depreciation	\$270,164	-27,192
<b>Net Surplus/Deficit After Depreciation</b>	<b>\$227,895</b>	<b>-74,751</b>

FOK delivered a surplus of **\$227,895** this year, a significant improvement from last year's deficit of **\$74,751** and well ahead of the budgeted deficit of **\$165,052**. This positive variance was primarily driven by a **\$244,000** bequest, which strengthened our unrestricted cash position in a tightening funding climate.

The result also includes **\$153,343** in hospital expansion funding received in a previous year but recognised in FY25 when the work was completed. As this is a timing adjustment rather than new income, both one-off items significantly influenced our reported surplus, and without them our operating result would look materially different.

## Revenue Analysis

To provide greater transparency on how Friends of the Koala is funded, the table below highlights the movement in each revenue stream year-on-year.

	FY2025	FY2024	%
<b>Grants &amp; Donations</b>			
Adopt A Koala	\$54,318	\$62,150	-13%
Joey Buddies	\$3,939	\$2,167	82%
Donations	\$267,920	\$241,780	11%
Bequests	\$278,206	\$68,500	306%
In Kind Donation	\$45,610	\$0	0%
Grants Expended	\$805,327	\$831,092	-3%
<b>Total Grants &amp; Donations</b>	<b>\$1,455,320</b>	<b>\$1,205,689</b>	<b>21%</b>
Membership Fees	\$6,160	\$4,150	48%
Fundraising	\$20,245	\$482	New
Nursery & Retail	\$122,845	\$182,540	-33%
Other	\$33,452	\$29,556	13%
Interest	\$37,528	\$31,862	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,675,550</b>	<b>\$1,454,280</b>	<b>15%</b>

## What This Tells Us

- Bequests were the largest movement, increasing by 306% due to a one-off \$244k bequest, a valuable but unpredictable income source.
- Donations grew by 11%, demonstrating strong community support despite national declines in charitable giving.
- Fundraising increased to \$20,245, though net returns remain modest once event costs are considered.
- Grants decreased by 3%, reflecting the broader tightening in government and regulatory funding.
- Nursery & Retail income fell by 33%, with last year's higher figure boosted by project-linked grants.
- Adopt A Koala declined while Joey Buddies increased significantly, showing growing engagement with younger supporters.
- In-kind donations reached \$45,610, directly reducing pressure on cash resources.

Overall revenue grew by 15%, but once one-offs are removed, the underlying trend highlights the need for more reliable fundraising and philanthropic support.

## Expenditure Analysis

EXPENSES	FY24/25		FY23/24	
	Total	Funded %	Total	Funded %
Overheads & Administration	\$161,710	22%	\$179,860	38%
Advocacy & Community Education	\$24,124	94%	\$38,067	93%
Depreciation	\$41,502	0%	\$47,559	0%
Employment	\$662,966	49%	\$639,062	51%
Finance Charges	\$6,540	0%	\$5,694	0%
Habitat Protection & Enhancement	\$131,370	100%	\$104,010	98%
Koala Clinic Hospital	\$139,393	44%	\$156,425	93%
Marketing & Fundraising	\$64,597	3%	\$101,576	0%
Motor Vehicles	\$21,113	0%	\$42,606	60%
Repairs & Maintenance	\$29,067	0%	\$3,364	2%
Rescue & Rehabilitation	\$10,691	8%	\$32,308	99%
Retail	\$100,892	0%	\$116,900	0%
Utilities	\$21,226	0%	\$18,780	36%
Volunteer Appreciation & Training	\$12,567	0%	\$16,857	17%
Volunteer Travel	\$19,897	2%	\$25,963	81%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,447,655</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>\$1,529,031</b>	<b>50%</b>

This year's expenditure shows a clear change in how essential services are being funded. Total expenses decreased by 5%, but the share of costs funded by grants fell from 50% to 40%, increasing reliance on donations and untied reserves.

### **Key Shifts:**

- Hospital funding declined significantly this year, falling from 93% to 44%, following the conclusion of long-standing clinical funding partnerships.
- Volunteer Travel dropped from 81% funded to just 2%,
- Rescue & Rehabilitation funding fell from 99% to 8%, increasing the cost of frontline response.
- Overheads & Administration funding fell from 38% to 22%, consistent with grant trends favouring project rather than operational funding.

At the same time, some areas remain strongly supported through project-based grants:

- Habitat Protection & Enhancement remains 100% funded, consistent with environmental grant priorities.
- Advocacy & Community Education continues to be highly funded (94%).

### **Cost to Care: What It Takes to Admit One Koala**

This year we admitted 269 koalas, down from 344 last year. But despite treating fewer koalas, the cost to care for each one increased significantly.

- Our total gross cost per koala admitted (before funding) rose from \$4,445 to \$5,382 – an increase of \$937 per koala.
- Our net cost per koala (after funding) rose from \$2,231 to \$3,232 – an increase of \$1,001 per koala.

When applied across the full year's admissions, this represents approximately \$250,000–\$270,000 in additional cost pressure that FoK had to absorb just to maintain the same standard of hospital care.

This increase, combined with the decline in funded support for hospital and volunteer operations, meant that a much larger portion of our essential services had to be covered by donations, bequests and untied cash.

In simple terms: treating fewer koalas cost us more – not less.

### **Cashflow & Balance Sheet Strength**

Total cash and cash equivalents ended at \$1.47 million, slightly lower than last year's \$1.57 million.

- Unrestricted (untied) cash decreased from \$966,827 to \$846,011, reflecting higher unfunded hospital, volunteer and operational costs.
- Restricted (tied) cash increased from \$599,586 to \$625,289, showing continued delivery and acquittal of project-based grant programs.

A larger share of cash is now tied to grant requirements, while discretionary funds available to support core services have decreased.

Our balance sheet remains stable, but sustaining essential services will increasingly rely on building recurring revenue and securing long-term funding for hospital and operational costs, rather than depending on project restricted grants.

### Volunteer Contribution & Acknowledgement

FoK is supported by more than 180 active volunteers across rescue, hotline, leafing and plantation work, releases, habitat restoration and education. Their commitment, skill and leadership, especially from volunteer team leaders form the backbone of this organisation.

The economic value of their work exceeds \$2 million annually – a level of support that would be impossible for FoK to resource through paid staffing alone.

### Looking Ahead

As we look to the year ahead, our focus remains on ensuring FoK continues to deliver the high standard of hospital care and rescue services that our community and region rely on. One of our key priorities will be securing ongoing support for the Koala Hospital. Our Hospital Funding Proposal identifies that we need approximately **\$500,000** each year to operate the hospital at an appropriate level of care.

For many years, WWF and IFAW were among FoK's most significant supporters, funding a substantial portion of our veterinary and hospital staffing costs. Their investment played a key role in establishing and strengthening the high standard of koala care we provide today. While their current funding cycles have shifted, both organisations remain actively engaged in regional koala working groups, and we greatly value our ongoing relationship with them.

This also presents an opportunity for FoK to broaden its partnerships. Over the next 12 months, we will continue to focus on:

- **developing strong corporate and commercial partnerships**
- **building deeper industry relationships**
- **and engaging proactively with government on long-term koala conservation priorities**

These efforts will help diversify and stabilise our income base so our veterinary team, volunteers and frontline operations can continue to respond to the needs of koalas across the Northern Rivers.

At the same time, we will keep refining our fundraising approach, strengthening community support and exploring new philanthropic pathways. With thoughtful planning, disciplined financial management and the unwavering dedication of our volunteers and staff, FoK is well positioned to continue its mission: **to rescue, rehabilitate and release as many koalas as possible, and protect the habitat that sustains them.**

We remain grateful to every donor, partner, volunteer, and supporter who helped us navigate this year. Their continued support ensures FoK remains a strong and resilient organisation for the years ahead.

**Lielette Calleja**  
**Treasurer**



**It is time to give a F.O.K**





**6,672**

Total number of koalas admitted to Friends of the Koala



**7,829**

Total number of koala rescues



**2,322**

Total number of koalas released



**20,583**

Number of koala records in the database

*The above figures reflect impact since FoK opened in 1986.*

## Leading cause of Koala Admissions



Chlamydia leading cause of koala admission (55%)



Admission due to other diseases.



Admission due to collision with vehicles.



Encounter with dogs or other animals



Remaining 15% of admissions are due to orphaning, falls from trees and/or misadventure.

## Koala statistics for this reporting period

**269** Koala admissions

**103** Koalas released

**305** Koalas rescued

**60** Koalas vaccinated

Creating change

# Impact Report FY24-25



**\$1,205,689**

in total donations and grants received



**530+**

Friends of the Koala members



**180  
volunteers**

Donating their time to advance the mission of FOK.

## FOK Staff and Volunteers

**\$2.0M+**

Volunteer equivalent of time donated.

**9,000 km**

A volunteer-powered rescue network covering over 9,000 km.

**8**

Staff. 5.4 FTE. FOK continues to use a diverse workforce model that includes staff and carefully selected specialised suppliers. Essential services such as HR support, accounting, financial oversight and locum veterinary expertise are outsourced to qualified professionals.

## Plantations and Nursery

**9**

Plantations.

**4728**

Number of native plants/koala food trees sold.

**348**

Trees planted in FOK plantation.

# Hotline Statistics

The Friends of the Koala (FOK) Hotline remains a crucial entry point for the community to report koala rescues, injuries, and welfare concerns.

Data from hotline call logs, web reports, and volunteer hotliner records were compared and analysed across 2024–2025.

Total recorded calls (web data)

**526**

Total hotline records reviewed

**540 calls logged by hotliners**

Highest amount of calls logged by one user (volunteer)

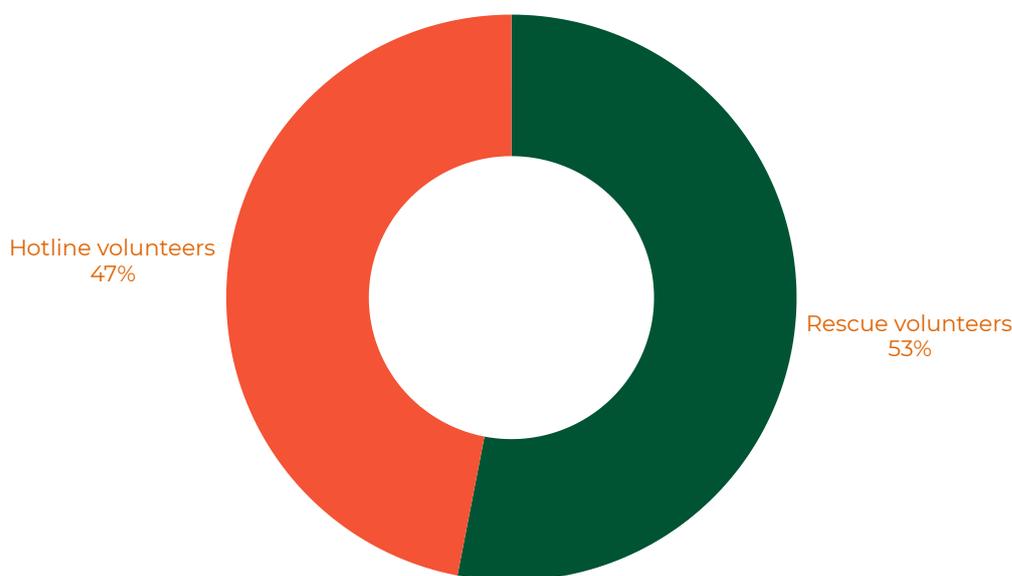
**66 calls**

Nearly half of all calls, where handled by

**6 hotline volunteers**

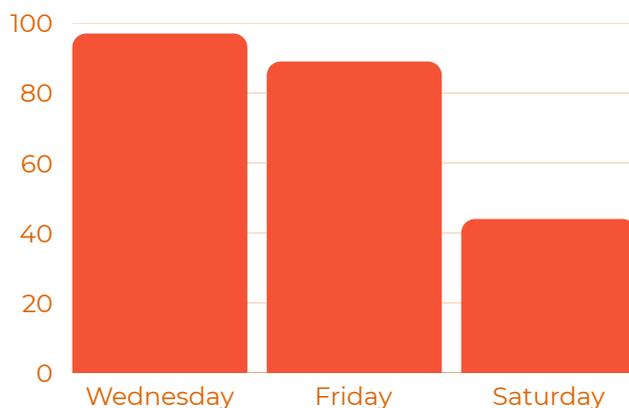
Number of hotline calls, leading to rescues

**305**



## Day of the week

Calls were evenly spread across the week but Wednesdays and Fridays were slightly higher than average. Weekends were quieter, with Saturday being the lowest.



## Peak call times

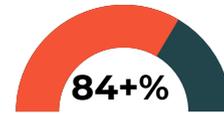
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Overnight calls (12:00am-06:00am) made up less than 5% of the total calls.



Single busiest hour 4:00pm equating to 10.65% of calls.



Calls made to the hotline between 8:00am-6:00pm

# Northern Rivers Koala Hospital

This financial year saw 305 admissions to the Northern Rivers Koala Hospital.

Of these, 32% were released, 48% euthanised, 18% died, and 1% remain in care. Importantly, when looking only at koalas alive at the time of admission, 38% were successfully released back into the wild – a 3% increase from last year's 35%. For koalas admitted into ongoing care, the release rate rose to 76%, compared to 71% in the previous year. These improvements reflect a promising upward trend in rehabilitation outcomes.

Sadly, many rescues arrive in a condition too severe to survive. Of the 56 koalas recorded as deceased, 50 were dead on arrival, while a further 3 died within the first 24 hours and 3 died during care. Likewise, of the 147 koalas euthanised, 126 were humanely euthanised on arrival due to untreatable trauma or advanced disease, with a further 21 euthanised after veterinary assessment during their time in care. These figures highlight both the severity of threats facing wild koalas and the critical role of rapid triage in preventing suffering.

Despite these challenges, the hospital continues to achieve strong outcomes for those progressing to treatment and rehabilitation. The dedication of our veterinary team, nurses, and volunteers remains the cornerstone of this success. Volunteer contributions have been especially vital during peak breeding season, with support spanning hospital nursing, laboratory testing, data entry, leaf collection, and enclosure care.

The year has also marked important growth for the hospital's facilities. Work is underway on a major hospital expansion, which will feature a purpose-built laboratory, a dedicated chlamydia PCR lab, a sterile surgical suite, and three new Intensive Care Unit (ICU) rooms. Together, these developments will significantly strengthen our ability to provide advanced veterinary treatment, improve critical care capacity, and expand our research capabilities. This year also saw 60 koalas vaccinated against chlamydia during their stay in care, an exciting step forward in broader statewide conservation efforts.

Friends of the Koala continues to deliver 24/7 assistance to rescued koalas, supported by the ongoing partnership of Currumbin Wildlife Hospital and North Coast Emergency Vets. Their contributions remain vital to ensuring every rescue has access to professional assessment and care.

As always, we extend our heartfelt thanks to our staff, volunteers, and partner hospitals. Their dedication continues to give Northern Rivers koalas the best possible chance of recovery and release.

## Research Projects

We remain committed to advancing koala health through innovative research and collaboration, ensuring a brighter future for this iconic species. In 2025, the Northern Rivers Koala Hospital contributed to several key research projects, with a strong focus on chlamydia prevention and diagnostics, while also supporting broader studies into koala genetics, physiology, and stress. Research projects include:

- University of the Sunshine Coast Chlamydia Vaccine Rollout: Now in its third year, this program enables us to vaccinate and monitor healthy koalas released from our hospital, contributing to statewide vaccine development efforts.
- University of the Sunshine Coast Joey Vaccine Study: Assessing immune responses in hand-reared joeys using a vaccine formulation with a more accessible adjuvant. Success would accelerate vaccine registration and improve access across wildlife hospitals.
- University of Queensland Scat Diagnostics Project: Supporting development of a machine-learning model to detect chlamydial infection in koalas through non-invasive scat sampling.
- University of Sydney Koala Pangenome Project: Samples from local rescues are contributing to a regional genetic reference library, improving our understanding of Northern Rivers koala diversity and resilience.
- Southern New England Landcare Genomic Study: Supporting a major genomic study sampling koalas across the Northern Tablelands to assess genetic diversity and population structure. Findings will help guide future conservation and habitat planning.
- Koala Health Hub, University of Sydney: Ongoing collaboration providing samples for cryptococcus, chlamydia, retrovirus and herpesvirus research and refinement of PCR diagnostic techniques.

Looking forward, the completion of our new laboratory and PCR clean room will significantly expand our research capacity, particularly in the fields of disease diagnostics and vaccine development.

We remain committed to innovative research and collaboration, ensuring every koala admitted not only receives the best possible care, but also contributes to the knowledge needed to secure the species' future.



**Dr Kate Thomas**  
**Superintendent Veterinarian, Northern Rivers Koala Hospital**



## **Meet Wriggles**

Wriggles is an 8-month-old female joey, was found in Tregear after becoming entangled in a barbed wire fence. She had sustained severe penetrating abdominal injuries and required emergency, life-saving surgery.

Her road to recovery wasn't easy. Wriggles underwent two rounds of intensive antibiotic therapy, a plasma blood transfusion, and multiple surgeries to repair the damage. She required weeks of close observation, regular medications, and frequent bandage changes as her wound slowly healed.

Thanks to the dedication of our veterinary and rehabilitation teams, Wriggles has made a remarkable turnaround. She is now strong, bright, and healthy, and has officially graduated to Joey Kindy, where she'll continue building her strength and climbing skills.

Wriggles will also be participating in the University of the Sunshine Coast's joey chlamydia vaccination trial, contributing to critical research aimed at protecting future generations of koalas.



**Your support goes directly to providing critical care to koalas and joeys like Wriggles.**

**Every donation, every hour volunteered, helps to protect their habitat, ensure their recover, and secure a future where these incredible animals can thrive in the wild.**

**Together, we are not just saving lives - we are safeguarding a species.**



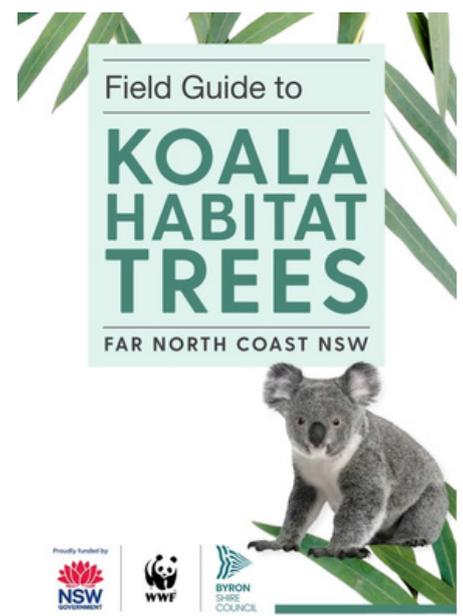
# Regional Koala Officer Report

The Regional Koala Officer plays a key role in supporting and advancing koala conservation efforts across the region. Working closely with partners, stakeholders and community members, the position provides essential on-the-ground coordination and expertise to ensure effective implementation of conservation initiatives. Established to assist local conservation organisations and the six local councils, the role was developed collaboratively with regional partners and is funded through the NSW Koala Strategy.

The region is recognised for its significant ecological value, attracting ongoing investment under the NSW Koala Strategy to deliver measurable conservation outcomes, including habitat restoration, population monitoring and community engagement.

Over the past 12 months, the Regional Koala Officer has focused on progressing and delivering a range of key initiatives. Highlights include:

- Leading the development of Koala Tracks: Linking Northern Rivers Landscapes, a project prioritising habitat restoration in the Blue Knob, Mount Burrell and Lillian Rock areas. More than 40 site visits were undertaken to assess private landholder properties for potential funding, with 26 properties receiving support. **Over 40 hectares of habitat restoration will be delivered through \$130,000 in Friends of the Koala funding.**
- Overseeing the implementation of the Regional Communication Campaign to raise community awareness during the koala breeding season, with the goal of reducing vehicle strikes. This included the strategic deployment of six Variable Message Signs across three local government areas in the Northern Rivers region.
- Supporting the allocation of more than \$240,000 in additional funding for 2024–2025 to deliver further habitat restoration projects across the six local government areas.
- Representing Friends of the Koala on the Community Advisory Committee, ensuring effective communication and advocacy for regional koala conservation priorities.
- Collaborating with local and regional organisations dedicated to koala conservation, fostering a cohesive and strategic approach to species protection.



# CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW



Marketing Report

## LIVE DATES:

- September 2024 to November 2024

## OBJECTIVES:

1. Awareness
2. Traffic to the Koala's & Cars Landing Page

## TARGET AREA:

- Northern Rivers

## CHANNELS:

- Print Ads
- Radio
- Paid Social
- Organic Social
- Digital Display

## PAID SOCIAL PERFORMANCE COMBINED

September 2024 - November 2024

Paid social played a crucial role in this campaign by allowing us to highly target specific audiences in the Northern Rivers area. Engagement was strong overall with 34k people interacting. The CPM of \$2.46, ensures efficient reach and engagement.



**Angie Brace**  
Regional Koala Officer

# Koala Rehabilitation Coordinator's Report

Since taking on the role the Koala Rehabilitation Coordinator, I have implemented the following changes over the past five months to support the safe rehabilitation of koalas in our care:

- Developed and implemented instruction sheets.
- Implemented processes to reduce the potential of koalas experiencing stress in care, including a 5 second immediate koala reaction check – team member to stand still for 5 seconds after entering run, to observe koala stress response.
- No koala interactions at all – no touching and no talking.
- Regular communication with Team Leaders via WhatsApp chat.
- Raised perch heights in run rebuilds.
- Created easy to follow checklists for shift jobs.
- Created 'cheat sheet' at each run.
- Created mud map in leaf bin area to indicate where 'Yesterday's Leaf' needs to be located.
- Designed 'Topics for Discussion' – new learning tool for pre-shift knowledge testers.
- With the help of Chris Bartlett, put up 'Silent Zone' signs around top runs.
- Updated whiteboard in Burrubi each month with items to be discussed with teams.
- Praise offers of suggestions by volunteers to encourage open communication.
- Organised QR codes to be created and turned into stickers to go on the front of donation boxes – for those who don't have cash.
- Started lining the fence around top run, with shade cloth to create privacy from members of the public walking through the area.

**Christine Hahn**  
**Koala Rehabilitation Coordinator**

# Rescue Coordinator's Report

Friends of the Koala in northern New South Wales operates a vital 24/7 Rescue Service across a large operational area the cornerstone of our conservation efforts.

This is a breakdown of our rescue program focusing specifically on the rescue process challenges and outcomes.

Total rescues in the 2024 25 period was 269 rescues; release rate was 103 of these koalas successfully rehabilitated and released back into the wild.

Well over half of the captured koalas unfortunately do not survive due to severe injuries or advanced diseases this necessitates euthanasia on welfare grounds. We often pick them up too late for a recovery.

## **Issues and challenges for rescuer**

A small team of dedicated Rescuers face significant emotional and physical challenges, there is a rescuer shortage, like many volunteers-based organisation FoK has troubles with a limited number of available trained Rescuers relative to the vast area and number of callouts that we receive.

This puts immense pressure on rescuers, who need to be available at all hours in most weather conditions. We need a larger team after it has shrunk over the last year due to a variety of reasons. It is hard to train and keep rescuers in the group. They lose interest quickly when they don't get a call out over a period of time.

We are in the process of organising for training in the new year, where we will try and encourage former trained rescuers to redo the course and join in as active participants.

## **Physical demands rescuing koalas**

It can be physically demanding, involving navigating difficult terrain and using equipment to access koalas high in trees and handling stressed, sometimes injured animals. Working in extreme heat. Dealing with very emotional members of the public (MOP).

## **The Emotional toll on Rescuers**

Frequently dealing with severely injured or dying animals is a deeply distressing experience, the high rate of euthanasia or death on arrival can be emotionally draining for the rescue volunteers who invest their time and empathy in to saving koalas.

## **Severity of incidents for Rescuers**

Rescuers are often attending harrowing scenes involving severe dog attacks or car accidents which are traumatic for both the animal and the person responding. The Perry story is a stark reminder for us all. The challenges of the external environment are highlighted by the tragic story of Perry a koala successfully rescued rehabilitated and released by FoK.

Despite a successful return to the wild, Perry was fatally struck by a car two years later on the same road where she was first found injured. No one will ever know the suffering that happened on the drive that night to the emergency vets for Perry the koala and the rescuer who transported the koala in so much pain.

This case is a powerful example of the persistent human caused threats that even successfully rehabilitated koalas face once they are back in their habitat and the emotional toll is the reality taken on by the rescue team. Perry in particular had a big effect on quite a large number of Rescuers/rehabilitators and Vet team, who were all in one way or another involved in the first and the second rescue.

## **2025 rescues and outcomes**

Overall volume, FoK continues to rescue up to 300 koalas annually across the Northern Rivers region and now down into the Clarence and Inverell area which both send their sick or injured koalas to us or Port Macquarie, we have seen a rise in the number of koalas that have been sent here. Our vet teams experience has a lot of respect from our southern partners.

Car strikes, this remains a critical issue for us at FoK since June to October 2025 at least 27 koalas have been hit by cars across the Northern Rivers tragically 14 died on impact or before Rescuers arrived and another five required euthanasia due to severe injuries, five joeys were involved in these incidents most of them did not survive, FoK is reporting an alarming increase in car hits including nine koalas struck on the Bruxner highway near Tatham turn off, Mckeys Hill area. The disease Chlamydia continues to be an ongoing cause for admissions and euthanasia. FoK is actively vaccinating all koalas in their care as part of a research trial to improve outcomes. If we can capture the koalas with Chlamydia early enough the vet team can save them.

Natural disasters, the ex-cyclone Alfred in early 2025 caused significant disruption and new rescue challenges, we rescued koalas covered in sticky toxic Mud and dealt with storm damage to habitat whilst trying to access areas. We received a number of koalas over this time, initially five I believe and three were Joeys who were taken into care but out of the three only one survived and was released back into the wild. We and the koalas will be facing many issues based on the weather that we can expect throughout the storm season. Part of the rescue team did an on-river survey over 2 days to identify koalas and their condition after the flood receded. The results were encouraging.

## **Areas and rescue totals**

Lismore far exceeds any other area with a total of 147 koalas admitted followed by Byron Bay with 42 then Kyogle with 21. Other areas clocked up 12 or less.

## **New friends**

FoK has recently come to an understanding with some of the other animal rescue groups Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital (BBWH) and Northern Rivers Wildlife Hospital (NRWH). We have been able to use BBWH a few times now over the weekend to attend to injured and sick koalas. Sadly, this often leads to euthenasia as they are too sick or injured to be saved and not waiting over the weekend to be seen stops on going suffering.

## **Summary FoK rescue**

The rescue program is a vital yet challenging operation involving a small team of dedicated over stretch volunteers working tirelessly to respond to hundreds of calls a year while success in rehabilitation and release demonstrate the value of our work the constant Battle against habitat fragmentation disease and trauma-like car strikes and dog attacks results in a high mortality rate and significant emotional stress to the rescuers. The organisations efforts are a critical Lifeline for koalas in New South Wales but there is a need for broader community action and support based on a good education program.



**Paul White**  
**Rescue Coordinator**

# Data Management Report

Data is a powerful tool in the ongoing effort to protect and rehabilitate koalas. Through systematic collection and analysis of information regarding koala sightings, disease prevalence, and trauma incidents, we build a robust understanding of local trends over time. This knowledge enables informed decision-making and supports targeted conservation actions.

## Summary of Admissions Causes

- Chlamydia: The leading cause for koala admissions, representing approximately 55% of cases in the past year.
- Other diseases: Account for an additional 12% of total admissions.
- Collisions with vehicles: Responsible for around 12% of koala rescues.
- Encounters with dogs or other animals: Comprise about 6% of cases.
- Other causes: The remaining 15% are due to factors such as orphaning, falls from trees, and misadventures.

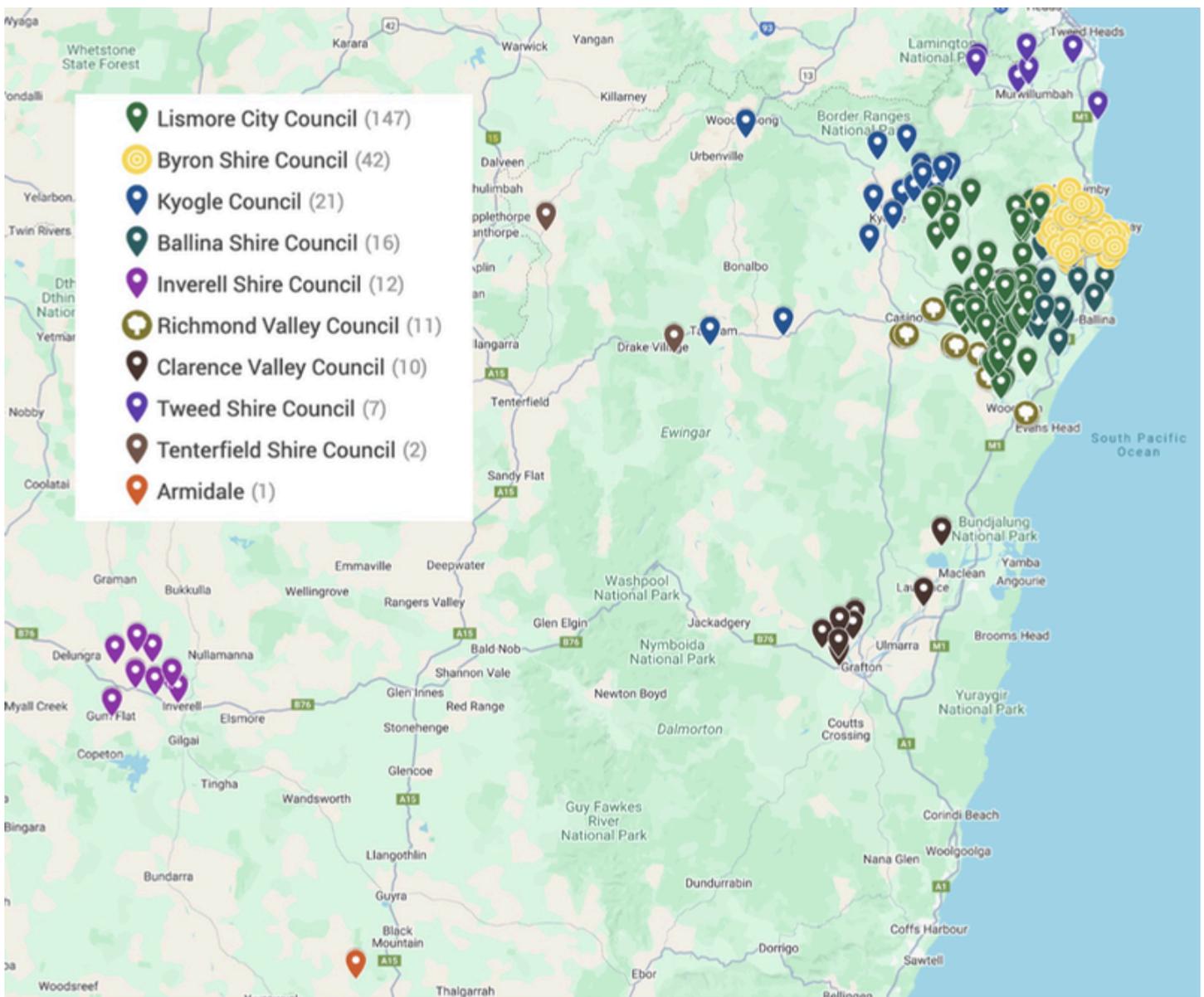
FoK is committed to maintaining high standards of data accuracy. This begins with volunteers responding to calls on the Hotline and continues through every stage of care until a koala is safely released back into the wild.

In the past year, a significant milestone was achieved through a project grant from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), which supported the creation of an online platform for our data. This digital transition has allowed volunteers to enter and access data in real time, facilitating collaboration and ensuring the integrity of koala statistics.

Collaboration between the Hotline, Rescue, and Clinical teams has been essential to achieving these advancements. While the implementation of a new data system presented initial challenges, feedback from volunteers has been overwhelmingly positive. The time required to enter data has decreased for most team members. The ability for all team members to review information from any device has streamlined the process considerably.

A map has been developed to visually represent koala rescues across the past year. Pins on the map, color-coded by Local Government Area (LGA), provide a spatial overview of rescue activity and further support the identification of patterns and areas requiring focused attention.

The ongoing refinement of data collection and management is central to FoK’s mission. Timely, accurate, and accessible data not only strengthens individual rescue outcomes but also enhances the organization’s capacity to detect emerging threats and allocate resources effectively. Continued investment in data-driven approaches remains vital for the future well-being of koalas in our care.



**Katrina Jeffery**  
Data Coordinator

# Koala Data - Rescue, Rehabilitation and Release

## Koala Admissions cared for at Northern Rivers Koala Hospital

TOTALS	Admitted 269	Released 103	Still in Care 2	Died 164	TOTAL koalas vaccinated 57	Gross Release percentage 38%
Total Deaths (admitted or not)	248	Death of admitted koala within 24 hours		129 48%	Rehab Release percentage (remove deaths within 24 hrs)	74%
Total not admitted	835	Live	751			
Necropsy only	31	Dead Body disposal	84 17	Dead sighting	34	Alive at time of call - Died before rescuer arrival
						2
LGA	Admitted	Released	Still in Care	Died	Cause of Death	
Armidale	1	0	0	1	Disease - Chlamydia	1
Ballina Shire Council	16	5	0	11	Collision - Motor Vehicle	1
					Disease - Chlamydia	7
					Disease - Other	3
Byron Shire Council	42	16	0	26	Attack - Dog	2
					Disease - Chlamydia	21
					Disease - Other	3
Clarence Valley Council	10	3	1	6	Collision - Motor Vehicle	1
					Disease - Chlamydia	4
					Fallen from nest or tree	1
Inverell Shire Council	12	7	0	5	Collision - Motor Vehicle	3
					Disease - Chlamydia	1
					Disease - Other	1
Kyogle Council	21	5	0	16	Attack - Dog	1
					Attack - Suspected/other	1
					Collision - Motor Vehicle	1
					Disease - Chlamydia	11
					Disease - Other	2
Lismore City Council	147	61	1	85	Attack - Dog	1
					Attack - Suspected/other	1
					Collision - Motor Vehicle	8
					Disease - Chlamydia	54
					Disease - Other	16
					Fallen from nest or tree	4
					Unknown	1
Richmond Valley Council	11	5	0	6	Attack - Dog	1
					Collision - Motor Vehicle	2
					Disease - Chlamydia	2
					Disease - Other	1
Tenterfield Shire Council	2	0	0	2	Disease - Chlamydia	2
Tweed Shire Council	7	1	0	6	Collision - Motor Vehicle	1
					Disease - Chlamydia	5
	269	103	2	164		

# Leafing Coordinator's Report

## Leafing resources

As the hard-working Plantation crew continue their tremendous effort of replenishing the FoK plantations which were extensively damaged in the 2022 floods, we are fortunate to have private plantations we can call on to enable us to harvest the leaf required.

At an average count of 15 koalas per day this equates to **24,000** branches per year! Thanks to Katrina for her fabulous property which includes a resident koala population, a plantation for FoK leafers and a plantation kindly.

Our main backup, Will on the Hill, regularly assists the Monday leafing team with pruning the soft release trees to prevent potential escapees and provide the day's harvest. Katrina maintains the plantation for us herself with her ride on mower.

Thanks also to Scott and Lucy, local landholders and an excellent example of the coexistence of wildlife conservation and cattle farming. In addition to their plantation, thousands of eucalypts have been planted along their riverbank where koalas and joeys are often spotted.



William and pole saw at work in Katrina's private kindly.



William and Lucy discuss pruning strategy

## Eucalypt identification training

During June, some of the leafing team who were available on a weekday, attended the recent NSW Koala Strategy eucalypt identification workshops and received copies of Jo Green's koala habitat book. Exciting upcoming news is a FoK exclusive workshop to be held on Sunday November 16 for leafers and other FoK volunteers/staff who could not attend the previous workshop.

In February, the annual leafing eucalypt identification workshop was held in the SCU grounds with David Sharpe, our local eucalypt expert. Thanks, David, for continuing to volunteer your time and outstanding ecological knowledge.



New South Wales Koala Strategy eucalypt ID workshop held at Southern Cross University with Jo Green and habitat guide



Annual FoK eucalypt identification workshop at Southern Cross University with David Sharpe

## Roster

As of 30/06/2025, the Leafing team comprised of:

- 17 rostered volunteers
- 7 backup volunteers

Although this year has continued to be difficult in terms of recruiting new volunteers, our new Volunteer Coordinator, Kyi Van Hooff, provides excellent support.

Thanks to our resourceful and committed leafing team led by supervisors Lee, David, Philip, Steve, Fiona, Gayle, Heidi and Les. It is real bonus when a leafer moves on but remains an experienced backup – thanks Tanya, Paul, Trev, Dale, Jen, William and Dom.

Of course, weather events such as ex-tropical cyclone Alfred are not pleasant but the Wednesday crew still have a smile.....



Lisa and David on a wet Wednesday during Ex-Tropical Cyclone, Alfred.

Harvesting leaf is an enjoyable way to get out and about, have a little exercise and learn about eucalypts with like-minded people. WE NEED SATURDAY LEAFERS if anyone out there would like to give it a go!



**Fiona Dawson**  
**Leafing Coordinator**

# Community Nursery Report

Our Bushfire Recovery Nursery in Lismore, which was made possible with funding received from the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife (FNPW), continues to produce and distribute thousands of free trees to landholders in the Northern Rivers region. By the end of June, we had distributed **273,602** trees with our extended project quota of 280,000 trees being approved by FNPW once we passed the original 240,000 tree quota.

Our total distribution of koala food trees this year (1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025) was 27,335 trees.

In addition to the free trees distributed, the Nursery also sold **4,728** koala food trees to Councils and private regeneration contractors. The combination of the above Grant, plus these and other plant sales in the nursery, generated approximately \$23,000 of income for FoK.

Our seedling propagation efforts were supported by tree donations from the NSW Department of Planning and Environment totalling **15,000** trees.

Maintaining volunteer numbers in the nursery continues to be a challenge. We now have 5 nursery sites to manage and maintain.



**Mark Wilson**  
**Nursery Manager**

# Area Liaison Report – Kyogle New South Wales

This year, in addition to attending the Area Coordinator meetings for parts of the Northern Rivers Koala group, I attended a meeting at the new Northern Rivers Wildlife Hospital in July to discuss how all the wildlife rescue organisations, our Koala Hospital and the new hospital could collaborate and work together to support each other for the benefit of our wildlife. This was a very positive meeting.

In July I was invited as a panellist for a Q&A session following the showing of a film at Kyogle Cinema about koalas and their fight for survival.

I have been raising the profile of FoK across the Kyogle Local Government Area (LGA) and encourage people to submit their sightings. I have written several articles for the local free paper Northern Rivers Talking Turkey and posted on Facebook, mostly with stories specific to koalas from Kyogle but also about the impact car hits are having on koala populations everywhere.

We organised to have a stall for the first time at the Kyogle Show which we were very excited about, but unfortunately the show was cancelled due to bad weather. We will however be attending this year – weather permitting.

In September myself and Chris, another Kyogle volunteer and rescuer, gave a presentation to the children at Fairymount Preschool. The children had lots of questions and Chris played a recording of a koala bellowing, which went down very well. We also set up a soft release site for Higgins, a young koala who lost her mother following an attack by bees.

We found the best spot possible and with a coordinated effort between the Kyogle volunteers and the landholders, we monitored her every day and since full release she has stayed around the area so the landholders are still keeping an eye on her and letting us know how she is going, which is great.

Finally – to recognise all the hard work and dedication of the group, we organised a get-together where we could talk about things other than koalas. One was the most amazing home cooked Thai dinner at Ricky and Julies, and the other was getting a FoK team together (The Kool Koalas) for a 70s trivia night which was great fun.

I don't know if I should be proud or embarrassed that I was the only person in the room who knew that the song Crazy Horses was sung by The Osmonds!!!!



FoK Trivia Team (The Kool Koalas)

**Linda Swankie**  
Area Liaison, Kyogle



# Area Liaison Report – Lismore New South Wales

The year was eventful in many ways, which left limited time for engagement on a broader spectrum than I would have liked.

This year due to various events, there was a reduced focus on engagement, with an intense focus on submissions for Development Applications (DA's) that would affect koala habitat and movement negatively and working closely with our council liaison on various topics.



**Ina Egermann**  
**Project Officer and Area Liaison, Lismore**



600 tree planting, through the WWF project.



One year later, after Cyclone Alfred



# Area Liaison Report – Lismore New South Wales



Fay and Maria volunteers measuring growth – visiting trees after 6-months planting through the Hanging out East Coraki Project



# Area Liaison Report – Tweed Shire New South Wales

FoK has a low number of rescues mainly in the coastal area which is also the location included in the Tweed Coast Koala Plan of Management. Majority of calls go to local group Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers (TVWC), and sick or injured Koalas are transferred for veterinary care at Currumbin Wildlife Hospital (CWH).

I would like to thank TVWC and CWH for attending to these animals as the priority is to have the quickest and most efficient response and care. The dedicated team of Tweed rescuers respond to both FoK and TVWC, thank you. Sightings are received from across the shire with many in the residential areas north of the Tweed River where habitat is highly fragmented.

During the year the focus of road strike has become Terranora Road and the M1 on the strip from Cudgera Creek to north of Eviron Road.

Tweed Shire Council facilitate quarterly Tweed Coast Advisory Committee meetings where Lorraine Vass represents FoK and I attend as a community representative and appointed Chairperson at the first meeting of 2025. Tweed Shire Council has a particularly energetic environmental team who are extremely supportive of Koala conservation, not only in the Shire but across the Northern Rivers region.



Rhonda in black FoK T-shirt

# Area Liaison Report – Tweed Shire New South Wales

Development of areas which impact on Koala habitat is ongoing with a large proposal for a Caravan Park in a key movement area from Pottsville Wetlands to the Pottsville Environment Park. The highly significant site is within a Koala Activity Precinct in the Tweed Coast KPoM and also identified in the North Coast Regional Koala Strategy as an area recommended to Create additional habitat for Koalas. FoK responded with submissions, mapping and was one of the three speakers at each of the on site Land & Environment Court hearings. A large number of groups and individual community members rallied at the hearings. The court refused the application, and the property is now for sale. What next?

Participating in the North Coast Regional Koala Network is a continuing vehicle for regional collaboration and keeping abreast of statewide and national initiatives in Koala conservation.

FoK held a stall at the Caldera and Tweed Landcare World Environment Day event where there was interest in the sighting map and other information and the opportunity to purchase Koala habitat trees thanks to our nursery. Information and education is regularly provided to the community.

Thanks to all involved in the protection and conservation of Tweed and regional Koala populations and their habitat.

**Rhonda James**  
**Area Liaison,**  
**Tweed Shire**

# Area Liaison Report – Richmond Valley and Ballina New South Wales

Richmond Valley and Ballina Local Government Areas have koala colonies located across the landscape, from large areas of continuous vegetation in national parks, state forests and adjoining private land, to small patches of remnant vegetation, corridors and isolated trees in the urban and rural areas.

Vehicle strike, dog attack and various diseases, as well as the odd case of misadventure, have been the major reasons for koalas coming into care at the Friends of the Koala Hospital. Unfortunately, the majority of these were either deceased or unable to be treated. Fortunately, there has been many reported sightings from members of the public of healthy koalas, particularly around Woodburn–Doonbah, Evans Head, Broadwater, Rileys Hill, Uralba, Lennox Head–Skennars Head, Cumbalum, Bagotville, Meerschaum Vale and Rous–Rous Mill areas.

The NSW Government has provided funding for a set of variable message signs (VMS) in each Council area. I have been working with the local Councils on locations for the VMS signage – to roll out in the 2025–2026 financial year, as well as discussing Ballina Council's consideration to Virtual Fencing.

Ballina Shire Council and I developed a Koala Road Management Toolkit a few years ago, which includes Koala Spotter Training for all road crews. We have been working on a review of the document and training.

Advocacy is important to having our koalas on the agenda in strategic planning documents, development applications, changes to programs, and raising awareness in the local and broader community. This has been a busy year with submissions and attendance at NPWS Wildlife Rehabilitation Review Roundtable at Ballina, attendance at Area Coordinator and Northern Rivers Regional Koala Network meetings, a submission against the proposed Bagotville Resource Recovery Facility (which was withdrawn by the applicant).

I also attended various functions within community to maintain awareness, and again delivered Koala Detectives to Evans K–12 Environmental Class, delivered Koala Watch training at Tintenbar. I did an interview for an article by Katie Wu in The Atlantic, and a video-interview with Graeme Readfearn in the Guardian. A short video was made on Koala Watching and can be viewed on the Richmond Landcare Inc. website.

If there is anyone from Ballina or Richmond Valley local government areas interested in becoming more involved in our local koala conservation please reach out.



**Maria Matthes**  
**Project Officer and Area Liaison,**  
**Richmond Valley and Ballina**

# Area Liaison Report – Byron New South Wales

2025 has been another challenging year in both rescue and release of koalas across the Byron Local Government area.

Sadly, disease remains the leading cause of koalas needing to come into care, followed very closely by vehicle road strikes on our ever-increasing busy roads all across the Byron Shire. To date this year there have been 14 known koalas hit by vehicles on our roads. Only 2 were rescued alive but were later euthanised due to their injuries, 11 were dead on arrival and 1 very recent strike on Coolamon Scenic Drive had a very lucky escape with minimal injuries.

Fortunately, we have the support of a great team at Byron Shire Council with Liz Caddick, Jo Green replaced now by Jane Baldwin. They do all they can to support our requests for help to try to keep our koalas safe. We also work closely with Linda Sparrow from Bangalow Koalas in responding to various rescue situations that arise.

Byron council organised 5 light towers and variable message signage boards (VMS) along Hinterland Way, north of Bangalow, in a known koala hotspot. There had been no koalas HBC in this area, which was a very positive outcome, until sadly there was an 8yo male hit and killed late last week in that area.

Along with Bangalow Koalas, Tom Hammat and Glen Wallis from Road Hire, Byron Council also have put into place VMS signage along Bangalow/Broken Head Road heading into Suffolk Park, another hotspot area where a well-known koala Moji was hit and killed in August 2024 during morning peak hour traffic.

It is promising that the public seems to be more aware and educated on the health issues facing koalas and seem to be reporting sickness whereby the disease has not progressed that far that it seems the koala can be treated and ultimately returned to the wild. This is a very rewarding part of the role we play, releasing koalas, and not one release, similar to a rescue, is ever the same.

Another challenge this year has been the increasing koala population at the Cape Byron area and the attention they draw from the huge population of visitors to the area. Social media plays a huge role in alerting visitors to the presence of koalas, and they are being harassed from the public to an unacceptable level.

We are working with National Park to come up with actions that can be undertaken to try to protect these koalas from this attention. This is a work in progress and hopefully we are close to implementing education signage and path barriers to keep visitors to the path and not harassing the koalas further. I will continue to follow up on all these projects as time and rescues allow.



**Dale Viola**  
**Area Liaison, Byron Shire**



# Emergency Response Coordinator Report

As Friends of the Koala's Emergency Response Coordinator, I am part of the Northern Rivers Wildlife Emergency Response Team and attended regular meetings with the Northern Rivers Wildlife Emergency Response Coordinators, represented by the seven wildlife rehabilitation organisations in the Northern Rivers. We have been progressing with the preparation of a NRWERT Operational Plan, and supporting development of training modules for bushfire response. I also attended the Northern Rivers Wildlife Network meetings.

The NRWERT coordinated approach has been and will be critical to successfully responding to emergency events. IFAW ran a Blackwalk training in April which was attended by five FOK members. This was a great day with attendees getting to work in teams and experience what a fire ground is like and all the effort that goes into an emergency response.

It seems that natural disasters are becoming more frequent and extreme. Tropical Cyclone Alfred and following Tropical Low Pressure System, and flood, was our next big koala challenge. I had frequent NRWERT meetings, liaised with SES regarding safety, and the EPA-NPWS Incident Management Team.

Our FOK and NRWERT response targeted areas for reconnaissance, search, assessment and rescue based on level and location of impacts (flood/storm), density of koalas, known koalas, and reports to hotline.

Over 300 koalas were assessed at key locations, with 23 flood-muddied koalas observed and 21 koalas retrieved or rescued or assessed on site.

Of those 21 koalas, eight were euthanised, one died in care, eight were deceased, and four were released after care, including 1 joey and 3 flood muddied koalas. Two of the flood muddied koalas had unfurred joeys in their pouches. One has been recently sighted with a healthy joey on her back.

Our Emergency Response Team needs more volunteers for various roles in the Volunteer and Logistics, Planning and Intelligence, Operations, and Rehabilitation Teams. If you would like to be part of FoKs emergency response team, please reach out.

**Maria Matthes**  
**Project Officer and Area Liaison,**  
**Richmond Valley and Ballina**



# Hotline Report

The Friends of the Koala (FOK) Hotline remains a crucial entry point for the community to report koala rescues, injuries, and welfare concerns. Data from hotline call logs, web reports, and volunteer hotliner records were compared and analysed across 2024–2025. This report highlights call volume, timing, volunteer contribution, and alignment with the official rescue database.

## Call Volume and Timing

- Total recorded calls (Web Data): 526 across the year.
- Peak Call Times: Calls were most frequent between 8:00 AM – 6:00 PM, with the single busiest hour being 4:00 PM (10.65% of calls).
- Overnight calls (12:00 AM – 6:00 AM) made up less than 5% of the total.
- Day of the Week: Calls were evenly spread, but Wednesday (97 calls) and Friday (89 calls) were slightly higher than average. Weekends were quieter, with Saturday (44) being the lowest.

## Hotliner Activity

Total hotline records reviewed: 540 calls logged by hotliners.

- The highest number of calls logged by one user was 66 calls.
- Nearly half of all calls, were handled by six hotliners.

**Mal Waite**

**Hotline Coordinator**

# Plantation Report

Friends of the Koala Plantation team has numbered 12 over the year with a core group of 7 what a magnificent team, also great support from the leafing teams when we have had some of our team off for health concerns and holidays.

During the year we have planted 348 trees in the Friends of the Koala plantations to replace and extend the existing plantations.

The Friends of Koala Plantation team look after 9 plantations 7 in Lismore 1 in Goonellabah and 1 at Alstonville. This year has been very wet with many days to wet to work in the plantations it has taken till June 2025 for the plantation to dry out properly and for all the plantations to get a good mow. Some of the plantations still have left over issues from the 2022 flood that the team has been slowly dealing with like drainage, bank stabilization and invasive weed management.

The plantation we planted at Monaltrie in Chilcott Street on private land is growing well, we planted 140 trees last year and recently the team updated the plantation with a further 32 trees in the spaces that had been too wet to plant until now and replacing a couple of trees that did not survive. The owners already have plantings at different stages ready to be harvested by our leafing teams.



Volunteers from the Plantation Team



The John Deere zero turn mower acquired by Friends of the Koala through funding from IFAW has been wonderful for the plantation team. When we finish a mornings mowing of a plantation we look back and see beautiful parkland. Thank you IFAW. This year more of us have been learning to use the zero turn mower, but the star is Marco, Doug said “He is a natural” good on you Marco.

We have a number of Team members with their Chainsaw licence so the team has been pollarding and taking out big trees that we have to much of that variety. The aim is to replace them Tallowood and Forest Red Gum that the plantations still have a shortage of, to supply needed for the Leafer’s and Koalas back at HQ. As the trees are cut, we assess them to see if any are suitable for the replacement of perches in the Care runs at FOK this way there is always fresh timber ready for the Maintenance crew to use when repairing or rebuilding runs.

A big shout out to the plantation team who have been emptying of the leafing trailer this year. I thank all those who have helped with this task.

We would like to thank Craig Power who has been a valuable asset to FOK for many years and has decided to leave the organisation in 2024.



**Heather Gillard**  
**Plantation Maintenance Coordinator**



# Hanging out at East Coraki Project

Friends of the Koala's Hanging out at East Coraki: koalas thriving in an agricultural landscape project has come to an end. Our final report was submitted to the Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. Over the project we achieved:

- Improvement in amount of koala habitat, through the planting of 3058 koala food and habitat (climate refugia) trees. Some of the koala food trees are already being used by koalas in areas of high pressure on existing food trees.
- Improvement in quality of koala habitat, through the removal of weeds, (particularly smothering vine species) from, around and between koala food trees over 9.58 hectares. This will enable koalas in those areas to move easily and safely.
- Improved understanding of koalas in East Coraki – habitat use, home ranges, dispersal, overabundance, koala health, koala mortality.
- Improved approach to visually assessing koala health, detection of koalas in need of care, welfare management, and identifying those requiring health monitoring – resulting in 1193 koala health assessments being undertaken for over 383 individuals, and another 127 koalas which could not be confirmed as individuals; the rescue or retrieval of 32 koalas (3 deceased taken for necropsy), 15 no longer suffering (euthanised), and 14 koalas released back into the wild after assessment and treatment.
- Increased awareness and participation in koala conservation from the local and broader community, including field days and workshops. There is continuing interest in weed control, planting and continuing project actions. We also prepared an identification guide of 344 koalas for landholders to identify their local koalas.



**Maria Matthes**  
**Project Officer and Area Liaison,**  
**Richmond Valley and Ballina**



**Ina Egermann**  
**Project Officer and Area Liaison, Lismore**

# WWF Koala Corridor Creation Project

Friends of the Koala's Koala Corridor Creation project has come to an end. Our final report was submitted to WWF, with the 2-year project achieving:

- Increased awareness of koala conservation with five community plantings, two workshops and a field day held, with support from the community, landholders, Wardell CORE, OzGREEN Youth Leading the World, Rous Water, Border Ranges Richmond Valley Landcare Group, Kingfisher Environmental Consultants, Friends of the Koala, Jagun Alliance, Bundjalung dancers, and Richmond Valley Council.
- Increased connectivity of koala habitat with 5059 trees, shrubs and groundcovers planted on 25 properties. The majority of these are primary and secondary koala food trees. Some rainforest species were planted for climate refugia during drought and heatwaves. Some groundcovers were planted at three of the 2025 flood impacted sites. Plantings were monitored following severe hailstorm in May 2024, following Tropical Cyclone Alfred in March 2025, and at the end of the project July/August 2025. Survival of plants at end of project was 87.69%. To keep cattle away from plantings, 1.875 km of electric fencing was erected.
- Increased the quality of remnant or regenerating koala habitat through weed control and assisted regeneration over 15 hectares on 5 properties in East Coraki and Rous Mill. Evidence of natural regeneration of ground covers is evident at all sites. Weeds around surviving post-floods 2022 and 2025 regenerated. Weed control focussed on exotic vines, Small-leaved Privet, Camphor Laurel and Lantana and at one site Broad-leaved Paspalum.



**Maria Matthes**  
Project Officer and Area Liaison,  
Richmond Valley and Ballina



**Ina Egermann**  
Project Officer and Area Liaison, Lismore



# Our Management Committee and Governance

Friends of the Koala is supported by a dedicated Management Committee, with members bringing a broad range of experience across different sectors. The Management Committee are volunteers.



## Sub-Committees

- Human Resource: 2024
- Advocacy: 2024/2025
- Fundraising: 2025
- Finance: 2024/2025



## Meeting statistics

- 16 Management Committee meetings held.
- 18 Executive/Office Bearers meetings.
- 1 Special General Meeting.
- 1 Annual General Meeting.

\*This does not include sub-committee meetings.

### Management Committee 1/7/2024–18/12/2024

The following Management Committee members held office until the Annual General Meeting held on 18 December 2024.

Aliison Kelly (President)  
Rhonda James (Vice President)  
Beth Wilson (Treasurer)  
Vicki Meyer (Secretary)  
Susannah Keogh  
Christine Hahn  
Ela Foster  
Paul White

### Human Resource Sub-Committee

Aliison Kelly (Chair)  
Rhonda James  
Vicki Meyer  
Silva Everaers (General Manager)

### Advocacy committee

Rhonda James (Chair)  
Lorraine Vass

### Finance and risk committee

Beth Wilson (Chair)  
Silva Everaers (General Manager)

### Management Committee 18/12/2024–30/6/2025

The following Management Committee members held office until the end of the reporting period.

Mark Ambrose (President)  
Rhonda James (Vice President)  
Liette Calleja (Treasurer)  
Vicki Meyer (Secretary)  
Susannah Keogh  
Lisa Castleman  
Michael Cockerill  
Graeme Hawley  
Ela Foster – resigned 8/4/2025.  
Chloe Simpson – resigned 15/4/2025  
Roxanne Zybenko-Keane

### Advocacy committee

Rhonda James (Chair)  
Lorraine Vass

### Fundraising Committee

Roxanne Zybenko-Keane  
Ulrike Schuermann  
Nina Ayalon (Acting General Manager)

### Finance committee

Liette Calleja (Chair)  
Rhonda James  
Nina Ayalon (Acting General Manager)

# Volunteer Coordinator's Report

Volunteers are the heart of our organisation. They empower us to rescue, release and rehabilitate koalas and advance our mission.

During this reporting period, I:

- Developed a targeted recruitment marketing campaign for social media, to attract new volunteers via multiple digital platforms.
- Contacted local newspapers for editorial space to attract new volunteers. Advertising space was very expensive, so I appealed for support and was kindly offered a half page article that included photos, free of charge. This led to an increase from new members of the public.
- Contacted by Nimbin Times for news stories. I provide content monthly for the newspaper.

## **New volunteers**

Since the first recruitment drive via social media – approximately 5 May, we have onboarded more than 40 volunteers. Only a third of those have been retained (due to various personal circumstances of the volunteers), however we have had ample coverage during breeding season, and we have some solid and reliable teams working together.

## **Film Crew – videographer Tyson Mar**

Tyson contacted us via an email approach wanting to offer his skills to FOK as a nature and wildlife videographer whilst being back in Australia (Gold Coast) for a break in his international filming schedule. He has major corporate relationships with groups such as Defender and Amex and has been exploring ways to bring FOK into their space and develop relationships with their key partners in the hope of fundraising and awareness campaigns. Tyson and crew from Defender film team attended two releases which were coordinated over a period of weeks with assistance from the veterinary and rescue teams.

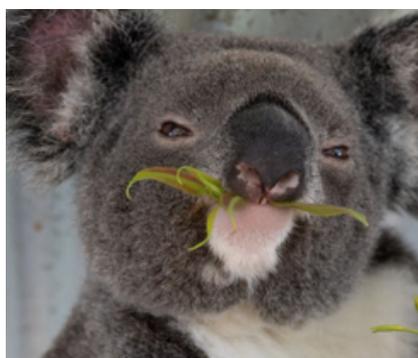
Tyson is currently working overseas and will make contact once he returns to Australia – Maria Matthes and Ina Engermann worked closely with Tyson on the field and will stay in communication for future collaboration ideas.

## **Rosterfy**

A new volunteer management and rostering system has been purchased to support the volunteer program. This will streamline the onboarding experience, support volunteer learning and development and roster management.

## **Kyi Van Hooff**

**Organisational Support and Volunteer Manager**





Maze and her joey Cob came into care with Maze showing signs of severe neurological disease. Following a full veterinary assessment, we discovered she had suffered significant spinal trauma and sadly, the kindest thing we could do was to let Maze go peacefully. 🌿

Her young joey, Cob, just six months old, is in the caring hands of one of our experienced home carers Renata. So far, he is doing well. Please send all your love his way.

While our hearts break for Maze, we are holding hope for little Cob as he continues his journey.

# Our supporters

This reporting period Friends of the Koala would like to express our sincere thanks to our ongoing major supporters

- WWF Australia for Stage 1 of the Hospital extension, volunteer support, vehicle support and the Koala Corridor Creation project.
- IFAW wages and vehicle support.
- Tony and Lisette Lewis Foundation's WildlifeLink Program and vehicle support.
- Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife for the Wildlife Bushfire Recovery Nursery.
- Department of Climate Change Energy Environment and Water (NSW) – Northern Rivers Regional Koala Partnership.
- Department of Climate Change Energy Environment and Water (Federal) for the Hanging out at East Coraki: koalas thriving in an agricultural landscape project.
- Department of Planning and Environment for providing 15,000 koala habitat trees.
- Premier's Department (NSW) for funding to fit out the training office area at Burribi.
- NSW Environmental Trust for restoration and rehabilitation Projects.



# Our supporters

Friends of the Koala would not be able to continue our vital work, without the incredible generosity and support of our partners and supporters. Working with Northern Rivers communities, we collaborate with our foundation, principal, project and community partners to achieve our mission and secure a future for koalas. We would like to thank our partners, supporters, donors, staff and volunteers.



# Our supporters



**In 2024/2025, Friends of the Koala received 4 bequests. We thank and pay respect to the individuals who generously provided a lasting legacy for Koalas in the region.**

**Their memory will live on with their families and all who knew them and through their lasting conservation efforts.**



**FRIENDS**  
**OF THE KOALA**

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