



NSW KOALA HOSPITAL ALLIANCE

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NSW's leading Koala Hospitals form an Alliance on Wild Koala Day

NSW's three leading koala hospitals today announced the formation of an Alliance, the NSW Koala Hospital Alliance (NKHA). The NKHA will improve collaboration, joint initiatives, and communication. In doing so, NKHA aims to achieve better conservation and wildlife rehabilitation outcomes for rapidly declining wild koala populations across New South Wales and potentially across Australia.

Treating close to 600 wild koalas every year, Alliance members provide care to injured, sick and orphaned wild koalas from across NSW.

The NKHA is established by Koala Conservation Australia Limited (KCA) Port Macquarie, Friends of the Koala Inc (FOK) Lismore, and Port Stephens Koala Hospital (PSKH) to foster collaboration in koala conservation, science, education, and culture.

The NKHA aims to:

- Develop strategies and develop policies advocating for the protection of koalas in the wild to prevent their extinction.
- Exchange information and resources to assist licensed rehabilitators and members of the public in the care of ill, injured, and orphaned koalas.
- Improve best practices for rescuing and rehabilitating koalas within the wildlife sector.
- Engage in selected research and education projects supporting the conservation of koalas.
- Foster camaraderie across the sector through mentorship and leadership training and mental health well-being programs for carers.

By combining resources, the alliance brings together over 700 wildlife carers, and 40 koala clinicians, providing clinical and habitat conservation expertise.

In addition to running the state's largest koala hospitals, the three Alliance members are engaged in science-based research targeting known diseases, and separately, the impact of climate change on koala populations.

Aliison Kelly, President, Friends of the Koala, said, "Friends of the Koala has made history by becoming the only wildlife hospital in New South Wales to receive a license to vaccinate all koalas coming through our hospital against chlamydia, in partnership with the University of the Sunshine Coast and New South Wales government. Chlamydia is the number one cause of death for koalas in NSW. This monumental milestone, took over a decade of tireless work, research, and dedication to achieve, and stands to dramatically benefit the koala populations in our region."

Ron Land, President Port Stephens Koalas, said, "The Port Stephens Koala Hospital is undergoing a significant \$2M upgrade and expansion to its existing facilities in 2024 to respond to an increase in demand for the care and rehabilitation of wild koalas. The new facilities will include enhanced diagnostic capabilities with the introduction of a 132 slice CT, additional theatre capacity, a cutting-edge research laboratory, aimed at conducting innovative research around koala reproductive technology, koala retrovirus testing and koala gut microbiome analysis."

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Sue Ashton, Chairperson Koala Conservation Australia, and inaugural Alliance Convenor, said, “We are now at a critical point in the survival of wild koalas. Their numbers continue to decline due to habitat loss, disease, road strikes and dog attacks. The Black Summer Bushfires have now pushed this already threatened species to the brink of extinction.”

Koala Conservation Australia (KCA) have operated the Koala Conservation Hospital Port Macquarie for more than 50 years and are establishing a Wild Koala Conservation Breeding Program. The breeding program will operate from a world-first purpose-built facility solely funded by KCA thanks to generous donations from the global community. The program will rescue NSW north coast koala populations and establish a genetically diverse founder population. It will contribute significantly to the conservation of koalas in the region, and beyond, via translocation projects utilising breed for release koalas from this program. Koala translocation has been identified as a key conservation management tool under the NSW Koala Strategy.”

The Alliance will work closely with local indigenous groups, drawing on Aboriginal ecological knowledge and environmental management to enhance koala conservation through the protection and rehabilitation of wildlife habitat.

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Background:

Port Stephens Koalas (PSKH) is the successor to Hunter Koala Preservation Society established 1978. PSKH holds licences (2) from Department Climate Change Energy Environment Water DCCEEW (NSW) to rescue/rehabilitate/display wildlife and is additionally accredited as a wildlife hospital by NSW Veterinary Practitioners Board.

PSKH provides access, engagement and undertakes scientific research to increase understanding of koala/wildlife health and related issues with selected tertiary institutions.

PSKH’s purpose is to protect and treat ill, injured, and orphaned koalas/wildlife that come into its care to release into the wild upon recovery.

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Koala Conservation Australia Ltd (KCA) operates the internationally recognised Port Macquarie Koala Hospital, Australia's first koala hospital, (established in 1973), in addition to supporting a diverse range of activities that aid koala conservation including scientific research, habitat conservation, and educational outreach. In 2024 KCA is delivering a world first in breeding koalas for release to the wild.

Friends of the Koala (FOK's) Mission: 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.

FOK was established in 1986 firstly to create habitat for koalas and then increased its focus to rescuing and rehabilitating koalas obtaining its license from NPWS in 1993. FOK's care centre was opened in 2018 becoming a specialist koala hospital in 2020. The organisation has recently rebranded the hospital to Northern Rivers Koala Hospital.

All three organisations share common objectives of promoting cooperation in the fields of wildlife conservation, education, science, and culture.

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