

NSW Koala Strategy



Foreword



The Hon. Gabrielle Upton, MP
Minister for the Environment

\$44.7 million

for koalas

including

\$20 million

for land

and

\$24.7 million

for actions

Koalas are recognised around the world as one of Australia's most iconic animals. However, koala populations in New South Wales are under increasing pressure. In 1992 and 2012, the NSW and Commonwealth governments listed the koala as threatened. Recent studies estimate a 26% decline in numbers over the past three generations (15–21 years).

The NSW Government is committed to ensuring threatened species survive in the wild through the *Saving our Species* program. To support this vision, we have developed a NSW Koala Strategy (the Strategy). The Strategy sets out actions for the first three years of a longer-term vision to stabilise and increase koala populations across the State. During this first phase we have committed \$44.7 million to stabilise koala populations. This funding includes \$20 million to acquire land to protect koala habitat and \$24.7 million to implement strategy actions.

This Strategy responds to the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer's 2016 *Independent Review into the Decline of Koala Populations in Key Areas of NSW*.

An expert advisory committee chaired by the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer guided the development of this Strategy. The Strategy was also informed by extensive community and stakeholder consultation. It will coordinate government and community action to improve koala outcomes. It is based on the principles of on-ground action, monitoring and embedding new insights into practice. This will allow the Strategy to be adapted in response to our learnings from the first phase of actions.

Making sure koalas survive in the wild requires strong partnerships with local communities. The Government will continue to work closely with koala rehabilitators, land managers and local communities.

Thank you to all who contributed to the development of the Strategy and to those who will continue to work with us to roll it out.

The Hon. Gabrielle Upton MP
Minister for the Environment

Expert advisory panel members



Dr Chris Armstrong

The Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer has been engaged in the development of the NSW Koala Strategy since the Report of the *Independent Review into the Decline of Koala Populations in Key Areas of NSW* was delivered in 2016.

The NSW Koala Strategy enables recommendations from that report to be taken forward. The journey to stabilise and then increase koala populations is a long one, and this Strategy sets a three-year pathway that can assist. The Office of the Chief Scientist & Engineer office looks forward to further engagement as the work progresses.

Dr Chris Armstrong

Acting NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer
Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer



Dr Rebecca Johnson

I am pleased that the NSW Koala Strategy recognises the importance of maintaining up to date genetic information on koalas and its incorporation into management and conservation. The Australian Museum welcomes the opportunity to be the official repository for koala genetic material in New South Wales.

The Strategy includes a broad-ranging suite of actions and the Australian Museum looks forward to contributing to its implementation.

Dr Rebecca Johnson

Director, Australian Museum Research Institute
Australian Museum



Professor Kathy Belov

The University of Sydney acknowledges the significant work that has gone into developing the NSW Koala Strategy. I particularly welcome the opportunity to develop veterinary training courses in partnership with agencies including Taronga Zoo.

Professor Kathy Belov

Professor of Comparative Genomics, Pro Vice Chancellor
University of Sydney



Associate Professor
Jonathan Rhodes

I have appreciated the opportunity to advise on the development of the NSW Koala Strategy. This Strategy provides an important starting point and I look forward to seeing future developments of the Strategy that ensure the long-term stabilisation and increase in koala populations in New South Wales.

Associate Professor Jonathan Rhodes

School of Earth and Environmental Sciences
The University of Queensland

Koala Strategy highlights

- ➔ Create over 24,000 hectares of new koala reserves and parks.
- ➔ Fix priority road-kill hotspots across NSW.
- ➔ Deliver a network of koala hospitals.
- ➔ Create a new single wildlife rescue call number.
- ➔ Develop a statewide koala habitat information base.
- ➔ Conduct a citizen science survey to improve koala knowledge.
- ➔ Designate the Australian Museum as the official biobank for koala genetic material.
- ➔ Pilot an app to collect information about koalas.
- ➔ Increase wildlife care training for veterinarians and veterinary nurses.
- ➔ Relocate koalas to unoccupied koala habitat.
- ➔ Research to significantly reduce incidence of chlamydia.
- ➔ Deliver priority research under a research plan informed by a research symposium.
- ➔ Monitor koala populations and their habitat through a statewide, cross-tenure koala monitoring program.



Saving koalas in NSW



The koala is a national icon, highly valued by the Australian community and recognised around the world. The community expects koala populations to be protected in their natural habitat.

In New South Wales, most koalas are on the central and north coasts. There are also populations in the Southern Highlands, Southern Tablelands, on the south coast and west of the Great Dividing Range.

The NSW Government has set an ambitious goal of securing threatened species in the wild for the next 100 years. The NSW Koala Strategy sets out the first phase of actions to achieve this goal for koalas with the objective to stabilise and then increase koala numbers over the longer-term, ensuring genetically diverse and viable populations across New South Wales.

We cannot stabilise and increase koala populations alone. That is why the Government will build strong partnerships with koala rehabilitators, community organisations, land managers, local councils, local Aboriginal groups, communities, business and industry and the research sector.

This Strategy provides a starting point to achieving our longer term goal to stabilise and increase koala populations across the State. It identifies a set of actions we will implement over the next three years. Through these actions we are committing to working with the whole community to protect koala populations. We will monitor the outcomes of these initial actions and adapt as we go to make sure we are delivering the best actions to protect koala populations.

During the first three years of the Strategy, the aim is to stabilise koala numbers in koala populations across the State by delivering actions under four pillars: koala habitat conservation, conservation through community action, safety and health of koala populations and building our knowledge and education. The Strategy will contribute towards the long-term goal to increase koala numbers and populations across the State.

Case study: Our koala water stations

Six new improved 'Blinky Drinkers' were set up in December 2017 to give Gunnedah's threatened koalas a hand with getting enough water to drink during summer. They have been funded by *Saving our Species* through a collaboration with University of Sydney, local landholders and a landcare group. These koala water stations were named after the popular koala character 'Blinky Bill' and designed by local farmer Robert Frend. Each water station can hold up to 200 litres and includes infra-red night vision cameras. The University of Sydney has been monitoring koala use of the 'Blinky Drinkers' and has found that koalas mainly visit the drinkers during hot months but are also known to use the drinkers in cooler months.



What's next?

The NSW Government will partner and work with local communities for further koala actions.



Koala habitat conservation

**over
24,000 hectares
of new koala
reserves and parks**

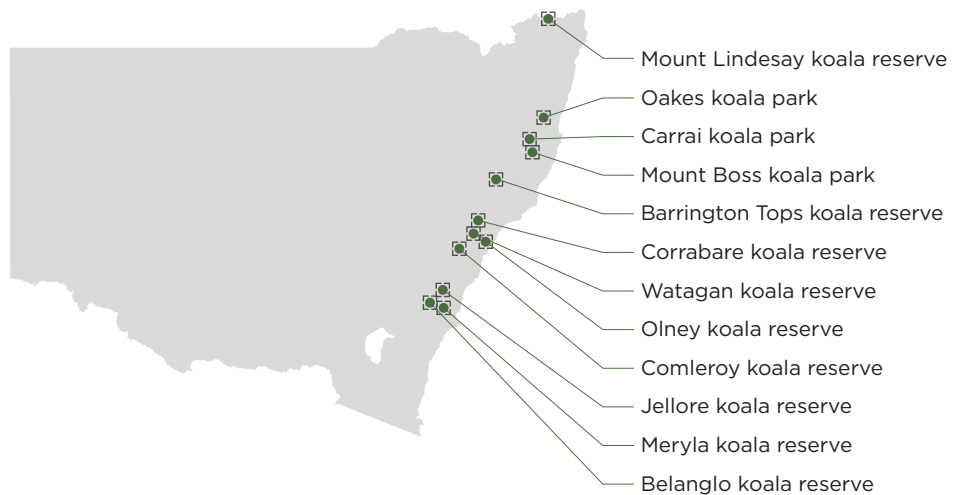
**\$20 million
to purchase prime
koala habitat**

Public land

Creating new reserves for koalas and protecting habitat corridors is a key pillar of the Strategy. More than 20,000 hectares of state forest on the Central Coast, Southern Highlands, North Coast, Hawkesbury and Hunter with koala habitat will be set aside as new koala reserves. Over 4000 hectares of native forest with koala habitat will be transferred to the national parks estate including on the Mid North Coast. This land will be actively managed to ensure prime habitat is conserved, key habitat corridors are linked and to provide safe homes for koalas being returned to the wild.

And more land is being added. The NSW Government has committed \$20 million to purchase land with prime koala habitat that can be permanently reserved as national parks.

Koala habitat will also be protected on other types of public land, for example on crown land and travelling stock reserves. Agencies will work together to develop a process for assessing the koala habitat values on government land. This will help inform if the land should be permanently reserved or have protections in place.



Location of koala reserves and parks

Private landholders

We recognise that private landholders are also committed to protecting koala habitat while managing their land for other uses such as farming – and the NSW Government is committed to supporting these landholders. The NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust will invest funds to help interested landholders protect and manage koala habitat on their land. The Biodiversity Conservation Trust will work with eligible landholders to maximise their options for diversifying income while protecting koala habitat on their land – for example, through annual management payments or grants.

Case study: Our first land acquisition

In December 2017, the government purchased the first property under the \$20 million koala land acquisition program. The 402-hectare property is located on the Wollondilly River in the Southern Highlands. It connects the Blue Mountains to wilderness areas of Morton National Park, creating a habitat link for more than 1000 koalas.

This habitat corridor helps to protect the Southern Highlands' koala population by allowing koalas to move between areas, recolonise and maintain genetic diversity.



What's next?

NSW Government is seeking further prime koala habitat through a targeted Expression of Interest.



Conservation through community action

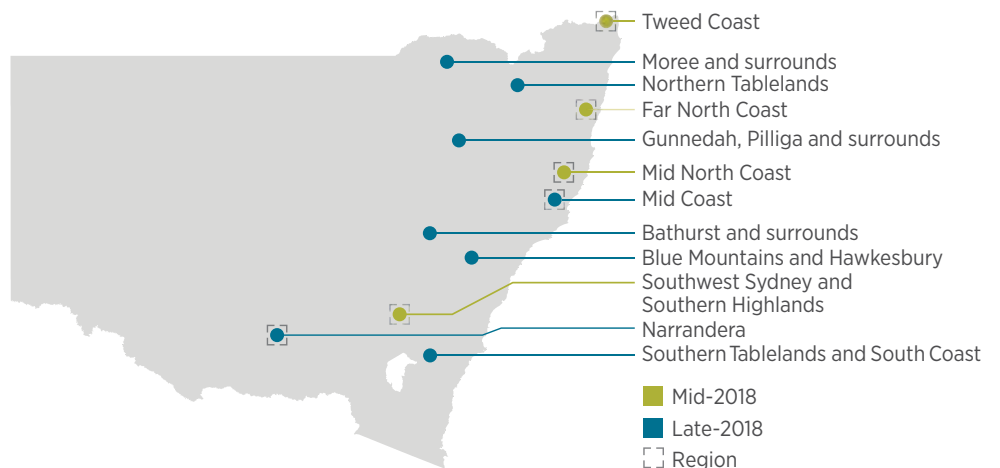
Establishing new koala reserves is an important action in protecting koala habitat but it is also important that we act to reduce the threats to koalas across all land types. Communities around New South Wales are committed to koala conservation and have a lot of knowledge about the best ways to protect koalas in their local area. The NSW Government will partner and work with local communities who already have information, knowledge and a network of people on the ground working to protect koala populations. Through local workshops we will bring together community groups, local councils, landholders, government agencies, Local Aboriginal Land Councils and koala experts to identify and agree on local actions for key koala populations across the State. The Government will also consider opportunities to identify local champions to promote local actions around koala conservation and management. In addition to the \$4 million *Saving our Species* investment to secure the koala in the wild, we will provide \$1 million to local communities to deliver on-ground actions to address risks to koala populations at the local level.

Local actions funded by the Government and undertaken in partnership with local communities and businesses will target threats specific to the local koala population and could include:

- planting trees to restore and connect koala habitat
- weed eradication in koala habitat
- local actions to reduce vehicle strike and dog attacks
- artificial water sources for koalas in heatwave prone areas
- local community education, data and information collection
- fire planning
- piloting koala conservation reserves across private and public lands.

\$4 million
Saving our Species
investment

\$1 million
local community
action



Location of community workshops planned for 2018

These targeted local actions will complement the actions under the other three pillars of the Strategy by providing local knowledge to inform how to prioritise koala habitat protection, improve the safety and health of koalas and increase our knowledge of koalas. We will also create an online community portal so the outcomes of the local actions can be shared and help inform future programs and actions.

The NSW Government will facilitate monitoring and data collection from actions implemented at the local level and will work with communities to measure outcomes and share information between groups.





Safety and health of koala populations

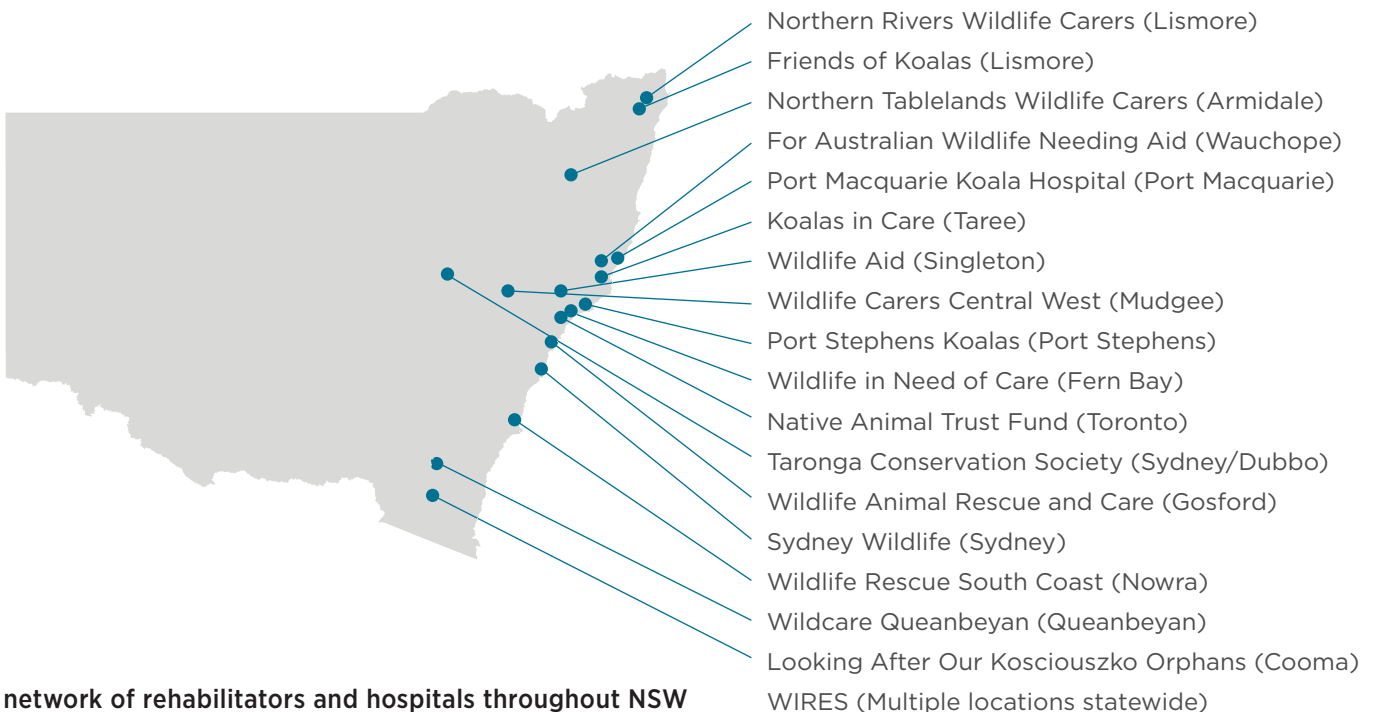
A key focus of the Strategy is action to conserve koala habitat and community based action to reduce threats to local koala populations. It is also important to support those who respond when threats cannot be managed and to enhance safety for koalas. The NSW Government wants to improve the triage, treatment and rehabilitation of koalas. The Strategy provides \$7.5 million to this crucial work.

\$10.8 million
for koala care

Fauna rehabilitators provide a critical frontline role in caring for sick, diseased and injured koalas and returning them to the wild. That is why we have committed funding to support the care and rehabilitation of koalas. This includes improving access of koala rehabilitators to resources, veterinary services, transport and facilities. This will significantly improve the coordination of rehabilitation services and increase the percentage of koalas successfully rehabilitated and released into the wild.

Establish a koala and wildlife hospital network

Another ambitious action under the Strategy will be to establish a network of koala and wildlife hospitals and veterinary services across New South Wales. This includes a commitment to build a koala hospital and tourism facility at Port Stephens funded through the NSW Restart program. We will also work with fauna rehabilitators, koala experts and local communities to identify needs in other areas. This may be a new wildlife hospital to treat koalas in another location such as Gunnedah, increased resources for an existing facility or transport services.



Targeted research

We are investigating other strategies to keep koalas safe and healthy. We are investing in research to better understand the impacts of diseases such as chlamydia on koala populations and to identify the best ways to reduce the impact. This includes trialling a chlamydia vaccine to significantly decrease the incidence of disease and increase the numbers of healthy koalas.



We will trial relocating koalas to unoccupied koala habitat in the same region if we determine it is the best way to keep them safe from human activity. We will also research the effectiveness and challenges of translocating koalas in a broader area within New South Wales to improve genetic diversity and health of koala populations.

Actions under this pillar of the Strategy will be linked with the building our knowledge pillar. The NSW Government will work closely with fauna rehabilitation groups and wildlife hospitals to make sure information is captured to help us better understand the number of koalas being cared for, the reasons that koalas have come into care, their length of stay, and the treatment received. Importantly we will better monitor what happens to koalas once they are rehabilitated and released back into the wild.

Single wildlife rescue number

We will deliver a single wildlife rescue call number to make it easier for people to find the right person to help them if they find an injured or sick koala.

Wildlife care training

We will also work in partnership with Taronga Zoo and tertiary institutions to increase wildlife care training for veterinarians and veterinary nurses.

Fix vehicle strike hotspots

Improving the percentage of sick and injured koalas returned to the wild is important. However, it is also vital to reduce the number of koalas that need care. We have committed \$3.3 million in funding to fix priority hotspots where koalas are struck by cars across New South Wales.

Case study: Caring for native wildlife

Taronga Zoo provides an important service for native animals including koalas in New South Wales. Taronga has two wildlife hospitals, one at Taronga Zoo in Sydney and the other at Taronga Western Plains Zoo in Dubbo. These hospitals care for 1300 sick and injured native animals each year.

Taronga's veterinarians and veterinary nurses are specialists in wildlife care, particularly koala care. They provide 40% of the veterinary services for native wildlife in New South Wales. They also have partnerships with other veterinary clinics in north west NSW to provide support for wildlife care.

However, Taronga Zoo's vets cannot treat all sick and injured koalas and other native wildlife in New South Wales. That is why the NSW Government will partner with Taronga Zoo and tertiary institutions, to invest in skilling more veterinarians and fauna rehabilitators to treat native wildlife.



What's next?

Training opportunities and an extended hospital network through Port Stephens.



Building our knowledge

The NSW Government is committing \$8.9 million to increase our knowledge of koalas and their habitat. We are starting by building a statewide koala habitat information base. This information base is being developed by the Office of Environment and Heritage, to be completed by mid-2019. It will have the best available information about koala habitat and koala population distribution in New South Wales.

\$8.9 million
koala habitat
information base

Improving our knowledge on koala location, numbers, and their habitat is key to informing how we can protect koala populations. It will help us prioritise the establishment of new koala reserves and private land conservation agreements to protect koala habitat, ensure local actions are based on the best available information and improve the management of threats and diseases.

One of the sources of information about where koalas are will be from citizen scientists in our communities. Locals know where the koalas are in their area, so we will be running a statewide survey and hope to hear from you. We will also build on the knowledge that is being developed through the NSW Government's *Saving our Species* program. The Office of Environment and Heritage will pilot an app to assist in capturing koala sighting and survey data.

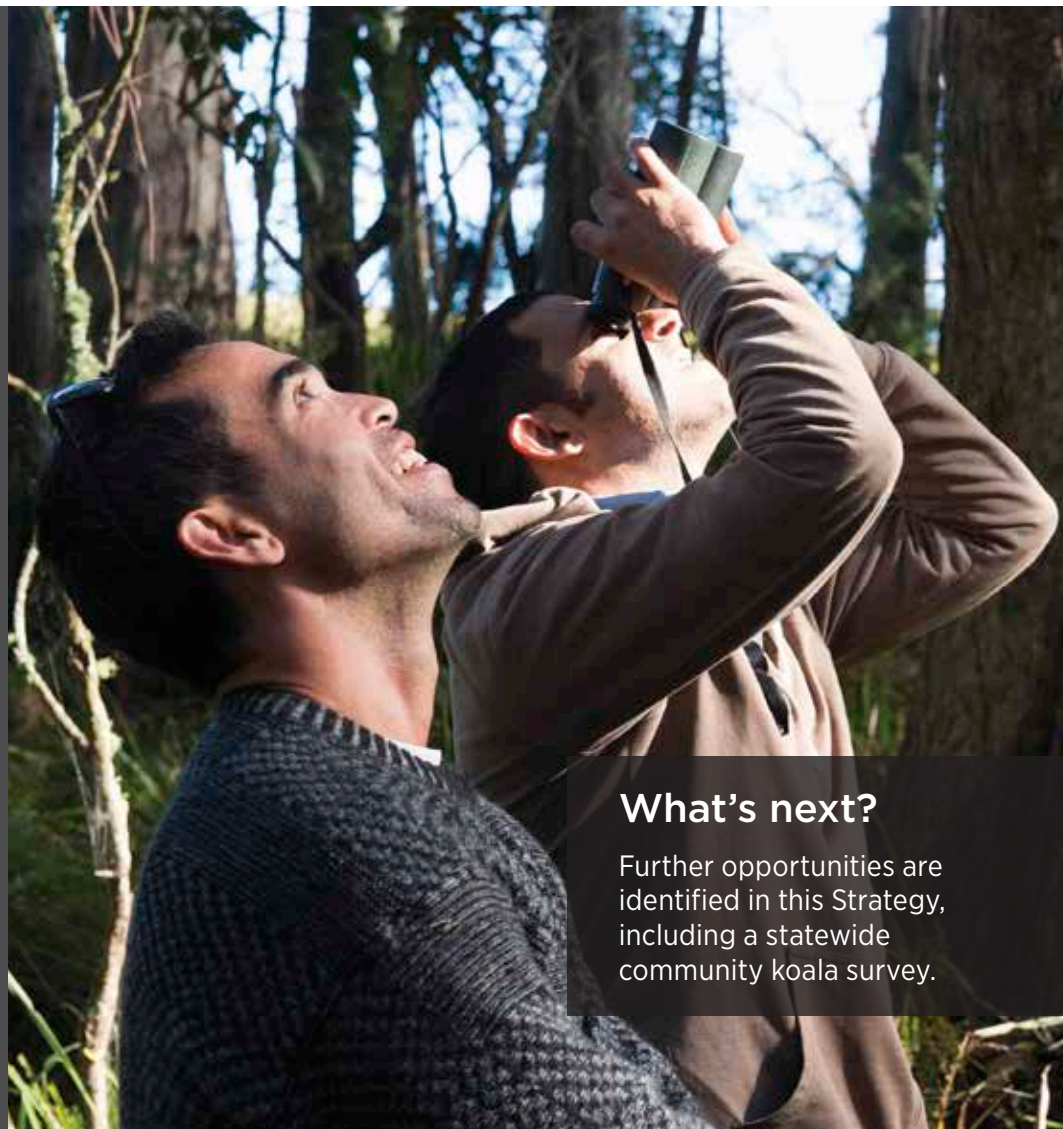
We will trial ways of using the information base in the Southern Highlands from late 2018. It will provide case studies on how data can inform conservation actions and future policy decisions to protect koalas.

Case study: Citizen Science

Citizen science allows local communities to monitor koalas in the wild and restore koala habitat. The Government is already working with community groups in key locations in NSW.

Citizen scientists, working with OEH and Conservation Volunteers Australia, are tracking and collecting data on 15 koalas in the Wollondilly Shire. Volunteers contributed over 500 hours to this *Saving our Species* project in 2017, including surveys and the planting of 1500 local native plants in areas important for koalas.

Additional ongoing surveys and monitoring take place in forests near Bermagui, Bega, Cooma and Coffs Harbour.



What's next?

Further opportunities are identified in this Strategy, including a statewide community koala survey.



A research plan will be developed and further refined at a research symposium in 2018. The plan will identify priority gaps that need to be addressed, including the impacts of and links between fire, disease and extreme weather events.

The NSW Government is committing funding to support this research plan and to leverage further funding through linkage grants and partnerships. In addition to the research actions outlined in this Strategy, will we also look for further opportunities to partner with the community, private sector and institutions to build on our knowledge.

Work completed under this pillar will also benefit other threatened species.

Case study: New flora reserves

There are some koala populations that already have local actions in place.

This includes the south coast koala population, where the Office of Environment and Heritage has worked with the community to survey and support the conservation of the surviving koalas. In 2016, four new flora reserves covering 12,000 hectares were created to support local koala populations. The Office of Environment and Heritage is also working with the local community to look at ways of improving the regeneration of trees preferred by koalas.



What's next?

We will draw on the insights from these programs to inform future action for other koala populations.

Monitoring



The Office of Environment and Heritage is developing a statewide monitoring program in partnership with other agencies. We will monitor koala populations and their habitat, and measure the effect of the actions in this Strategy.

The program will start with 10 to 30 sites across different koala habitats and land tenures. At these sites, the responsible land manager will monitor and report on:

- the distribution, size, demography, genetic diversity and trends of the koala population
- the extent and quality of habitat
- the distribution, intensity and impact of threats to koalas
- the health of koalas
- the impact of management actions.

The monitoring program will also be linked to the local community actions so that we are monitoring outcomes from that investment, and linked to fauna rehabilitation to gather data and learn from that important work.

All information we collect about koalas will be publicly available through the NSW Government's Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data (SEED) portal.

Implementing, reporting on and evaluating the Strategy



The Office of Environment and Heritage will coordinate implementation of the Strategy through an inter-agency committee of senior officers from NSW Government agencies.

The inter-agency committee will:

- advise on the development of the local actions for koala populations
- report to the Minister for the Environment each year on progress in implementing the three-year statewide action plan and local actions.

To inform the annual progress report and to achieve an adaptive management approach, an annual meeting will be convened with the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer and other independent expert panel members to review the work completed during the year and provide advice on priorities for the coming year. Annual progress reports will be published on the Office of Environment and Heritage website.

In three years we will evaluate the progress of statewide and local actions and reassess the priorities for further actions. We will consider the lessons learned and how they could apply to the management of other threatened species. The NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer and independent experts will be engaged in the three-year evaluation. Learnings from evaluating the Strategy will help inform what we do for other threatened species in New South Wales.

How to get involved in helping koalas

There are many opportunities for the community to get involved in helping save the koala and other threatened species. For example, volunteering at a national park, joining a community group or becoming a wildlife carer.

You could also come and join us as a citizen scientist and assist the NSW Government in monitoring the success of the Strategy's actions.

As a landholder or titleholder, you can lodge an expression of interest asking Office of Environment and Heritage to consider your land for a potential purchase.

The Biodiversity Conservation Trust will invest funds to help interested landholders protect and manage koala habitat on their land.



Three-year statewide action plan



Koala habitat conservation

Action	Description
Permanently conserve priority koala habitat as national parks	<p>The NSW Government has allocated \$20 million to purchase and permanently conserve land that contains priority koala habitat in the national parks estate.</p> <p>The Office of Environment and Heritage will analyse the best available information on koalas to identify the areas within the NSW landscape which are most strategic for koala conservation.</p> <p>Criteria for considering a property include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• presence of koala habitat• evidence of use by koalas• good connection to surrounding native vegetation• that reservation would improve the management of threats to koalas in that location.
Protecting koala habitat through new koala reserves	<p>More than 20,000 hectares of state forest on the Central Coast, Southern Highlands, North Coast, Hawkesbury and Hunter with koala habitat will be set aside as new koala reserves. Over 4000 hectares of native forest with koala habitat will be transferred to the national parks estate including on the Mid North Coast. The NSW Government will continue to work to identify koala habitat for conservation.</p>
The Biodiversity Conservation Trust to prioritise koala habitat for funding	<p>The Biodiversity Conservation Trust will work in partnership with landholders to establish private land conservation agreements to conserve and manage high-value biodiversity on private land.</p> <p>Through the Biodiversity Conservation Investment Strategy, the NSW Government has identified the conservation of koala habitat as a priority for private land conservation investment.</p> <p>The Biodiversity Conservation Trust will invite tenders to protect priority koala habitat and aims to purchase properties under the Revolving Fund for the conservation of koala habitat.</p>
Management of crown land, travelling stock reserves and other public land to conserve high-quality koala habitat	<p>All public land management agencies will be required to put in place appropriate management arrangements on crown land and travelling stock reserves with koala habitat or that form part of a movement corridor.</p> <p>The appropriate management options will be considered on a case by case basis and will include consultation with relevant agencies, Local Aboriginal Land Councils and the local community.</p>
Government agencies will assess koala habitat values to guide the future use of excess land	<p>The Office of Environment and Heritage will work with other NSW Government agencies to assess the koala habitat values of land excess to the agencies needs. This will help inform if the land should be permanently reserved or have protections in place.</p>



Conservation through community action

Action	Description
Deliver local actions to protect koala populations	<p>The NSW Government will support local communities to deliver on-ground actions in priority areas to reduce threats and protect koala populations.</p> <p>Office of Environment and Heritage will host community workshops to help communities develop agreed local actions, which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• planting trees to restore and connect koala habitat• weed eradication in koala habitat• local actions to reduce vehicle strike and dog attacks• artificial water sources for koalas in heatwave prone areas• local community education, data and information collection• fire planning• piloting koala conservation reserves across private and public lands. <p>In mid-2018, the first round of workshops to develop local actions will be held in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mid North Coast• Far North Coast• Southwest Sydney and Southern Highlands. <p>From the second half of 2018, the second round of workshops will be held in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bathurst and surrounds• Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury• Gunnedah, Pilliga and surrounds• Mid Coast• Moree and surrounds• Northern Tablelands• Narrandera and surrounds• Southern Tablelands and coast. <p>Criteria for funding will be developed. Local community partners will be required to report back on their initiatives and outcomes. The actions will also be linked to the monitoring program.</p>
Learn from Aboriginal communities on protecting koala habitat	<p>Office of Environment and Heritage will work with Local Aboriginal Land Councils, Aboriginal joint management boards and committees, other Aboriginal land managers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• enable cultural burning activities to promote regeneration of preferred koala habitat trees, either independently or supported by other land managers undertaking planned burns• engage Aboriginal communities in koala conservation through joint management of koala habitat on public land.
Develop an online community portal on koalas	<p>Office of Environment and Heritage will develop an online community portal for stakeholders and community to access information and contacts for koala initiatives in their region.</p> <p>The portal will highlight existing programs, local activities and best practice case studies.</p>



Safety and health of koala populations

Action	Description
Create a network of koala and wildlife hospitals and vet services across NSW	<p>The NSW Government will work with local councils, koala rehabilitators, Taronga and other zoos and communities to improve services such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• building new wildlife care facilities• expanding or upgrading existing facilities• transport services for injured koalas.
Research project on chlamydia in koalas	<p>Office of Environment and Heritage will partner with the Department of Primary Industries, researchers, Taronga Zoo and fauna rehabilitators to undertake:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a research project to better understand the impacts of chlamydia on koala populations and to identify potential management options• trialling chlamydia vaccines to increase the number of healthy and disease-free koalas and significantly decrease the incidence of the disease.
Fix priority koala road kill hotspots across NSW	<p>Roads and Maritime Services and Office of Environment and Heritage will identify vehicle strike hotspots and implement appropriate mitigation responses.</p> <p>Mitigation responses will consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the size and viability of the koala population in question• the future planning and zoning intentions of the proposed mitigation site• the cost of the proposed measures.
Relocation of koalas to unoccupied koala habitat	<p>Office of Environment and Heritage will work with communities, through the local action workshops, and fauna rehabilitation groups, to identify areas to relocate koalas. The relocation will be informed by research and an agreed plan to maximise koala health outcomes.</p> <p>Office of Environment and Heritage will also partner with researchers to investigate the effectiveness and challenges of undertaking the translocation of koalas. Translocation in this context refers to reintroducing koalas from existing NSW populations to improve genetic diversity and health of local populations.</p>
Support koala rehabilitators	<p>Office of Environment and Heritage will partner with veterinarians, Taronga and other zoos and Australian Museum to support koala rehabilitators with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• equipment and access to transport for injured koalas• protocols for triage and treatment of koalas• post-release monitoring of koalas• a single wildlife rescue call number• training on genetic sampling and data collection protocols.

Action	Description
<p>Train vets in native wildlife care</p>	<p>The NSW Government will work in partnership with Taronga Zoo and tertiary institutions to deliver professional development training for veterinarians and veterinary nurses in native wildlife care.</p> <p>Office of Environment and Heritage will also work with tertiary institutions to ensure wildlife care is part of the curriculum for vets and other wildlife care professionals.</p>
<p>Develop a best practice planning guideline for koalas</p>	<p>The best practice koala planning guideline will be used to assess and mitigate impacts on koalas from development proposals, State Significant Development and State Significant Infrastructure proposals. The guideline will also provide best practice urban design planning guidance.</p> <p>This guideline will help ensure developments can be designed to avoid koala habitat and to limit the indirect impacts on koalas.</p>
<p>Australian Museum is designated as the biobank to store koala genetic information in NSW</p>	<p>To create a single point of most up to date genetic information and data on koalas, the Australian Museum will be the official repository for koala genetic material in New South Wales.</p> <p>The Australian Museum will partner with other government agencies to help koala rehabilitators and accredited zoo and aquarium members to collect genetic tissue samples. Scientific licence holders will also be required to contribute DNA samples to the koala biobank at the Australian Museum.</p>






Building our knowledge

Action	Description
Create a statewide koala habitat information base to inform koala conservation decisions	<p>Office of Environment and Heritage is developing a statewide koala habitat information base with the best available data on koala habitat and koala occurrence throughout New South Wales.</p> <p>The information base will be released in stages, starting with the Southern Highlands region in mid-2018. The information base will be completed by mid-2019. It will be field validated and will be updated regularly as new information becomes available.</p> <p>The information base will inform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the relevant parts of the planning system including the review of the State Environmental Planning Policy – Koala Habitat (SEPP 44)• future policy development to protect koalas.
Statewide citizen science koala survey	<p>Office of Environment and Heritage will run a statewide citizen science survey in 2018 to improve our understanding of the distribution of koalas in New South Wales. We will ask the community to tell us about koalas in their area.</p> <p>This will build on the information we have from earlier community surveys and allow us to compare koala populations in 2006 and 2018. This will help us decide on priority sites for action.</p>
Pilot an app to collect information about koalas	<p>Office of Environment and Heritage is developing a pilot app which will capture data collected through field surveys and koala sightings. This information will be sent to the BioNet database which is linked to the Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data portal (see below).</p>
Koala Strategy monitoring program	<p>A statewide cross-tenure koala monitoring program will be implemented by land managers at 10 to 30 sites across New South Wales.</p> <p>At these sites, land managers will monitor and report each year on factors such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the distribution, size, demography, genetic diversity and trends of the koala population• the extent and quality of habitat• the distribution, intensity and impact of threats• the health of koalas and if they are affected by diseases• the impact of management actions.
Information collected about koalas can be easily accessed by the community	<p>All information we collect about koalas will be publicly available through the NSW Government's Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data portal.</p> <p>This data includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the statewide koala habitat information base• data from citizen scientists• data from the Koala Strategy monitoring program• data from fauna rehabilitators and koala hospitals• data from the pilot koala app• other koala data that is entered into the BioNet database.

Action	Description
<p>Supporting priority koala research</p>	<p>The NSW Government will invest funds to deliver priority research under a research plan to be informed by a research symposium.</p> <p>Current knowledge gaps include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • causes and impacts of disease • bushfire risk and the impact of bushfire management activities such as planned burns to address the risk • future habitat availability • impacts and potential benefits of translocation. <p>Funding to support the research plan will help leverage additional funds by supporting linkage grants and partnerships with other research institutions.</p> <p>A further investment will be made to research the impacts of natural hazards and weather events on koalas. Focus areas for this research include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the links between heatwave and other threats to koalas such as the onset of chlamydia • changes in availability of preferred koala habitat including eucalypt leaf quality • bushfire forecasting.
<p>Research on koala responses to native forest harvesting</p>	<p>The Natural Resources Commission will deliver an independent research project to better understand how koalas are responding to regeneration harvesting on the North Coast of NSW.</p> <p>The project will be government funded and peer-reviewed.</p>
<p>Improving our approach to fire management to protect koalas and koala habitat</p>	<p>The Rural Fire Service supports the protection of koala populations and will work with the Office of Environment and Heritage and other relevant agencies to develop bushfire management guidelines for landholders, councils and government agencies. These guidelines will use insights from bushfire research and forecasting to reduce the impact of fire on koala populations while also protecting people and property. The focus will be on managing priority koala populations (as identified by the Office of Environment and Heritage and Rural Fire Service).</p> <p>A set of actions to consider koalas in fire management strategies will be published separately.</p>



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Back cover, Jaime Plaza.

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Published by:

Office of Environment and Heritage on

behalf of the NSW Government

59 Goulburn Street

Sydney South NSW 2000.

Phone: 1300 361 967 (environment
information and publications requests)

Email: info@environment.nsw.gov.au

Website: www.environment.nsw.gov.au

ISBN 978-1-76039-938-2

OEH 2018/0250

May 2018