




**Friends of the Koala  
Annual Report 2020/2021**



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# We believe in a future for koalas.

Operating for over 35 years, Friends of the Koala has an established history of working towards positive outcomes for koalas in the NSW Northern Rivers, a region that is home to one of the last significant, genetically diverse koala populations in Australia.

With over 400 members, 150 active volunteers, and 8 staff, we rescue, rehabilitate and release koalas, protect and enhance habitat, assist with relevant research, educate the community and advocate on behalf of koalas at a local, state, and national level.

Operating across local government areas of Ballina, Byron, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tweed, we tend to approximately 350 sick, injured, and orphaned koalas each year.

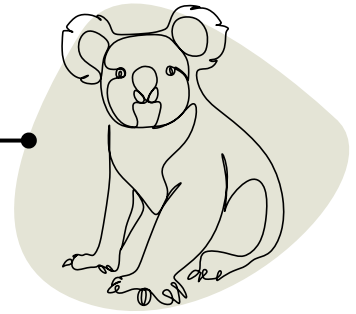
Based in East Lismore, we operate the only specialised Koala Hospital in the region, an Education and Administration Centre and Community Nursery.

Friends of the Koala are a not for profit organisation - we are for the koalas. Revenue earned through membership, donations, nursery and merchandise sales, goes directly back into the support, care and conservation of koalas in the Northern Rivers.

# Our Impact in 2020/ 2021

## Koala Rescue, Rehabilitation and Release

- 335** Koalas rescued
- 4** Koalas in care
- 98** Koalas released
- 29%** Release rate
- 1st** Dedicated 24/7 Koala Hospital in the region



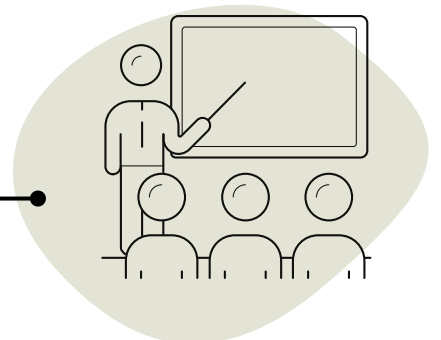
## Habitat Protection and Enhancement

- 11,713** Trees sold
- 32,871** Trees issued
- 2,790** Trees planted
- 4** Funded projects completed



## Community Engagement and Education

- >190** School children engaged
- 55** Koala information sessions held
- 6** Regional Koala Group meetings hosted





## Advocacy

- >**7** Responses to development applications
- 8** Meetings with State and Federal MPs
- 1** Submission lodged to NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into Koalas and Koala Habitat in NSW.

## Our People

**150** Active volunteers

**400+** Members

**8** Staff



## Financial Sustainability

- >**850** Individual donations from over 39 countries
- 914** Adopt a Koala packages purchased

# Patron's Message

## **Celebrating 35 years of Friends of the Koala and the collaborative, strategic partnerships that have made it possible.**

During the turbulence and challenges of the past twelve months Friends of the Koala (FOK) quietly entered its 35th year of operation. What a legacy the organisation has bestowed upon the region. First and foremost in my mind is our achievement of releasing 1,874 koalas back into the wild with a second chance at life. But to thrive, koalas need good habitat and throughout these past 35 years FOK has worked with landowners and public land managers to restore habitat and improve corridor connectivity for koalas and other wildlife.

FOK is the voice for all koalas' survival throughout the Northern Rivers of New South Wales (NSW). We continue to be a forthright advocate, a committed community educator and an eager partner in koala-related research. The group also facilitates long-standing friendships amongst its members, providing many with a sense of family, belonging, and purpose. The social aspect of FOK's function is often overlooked but it's important to the success of the organisation's mission and to community cohesion.

Our odyssey has involved seeking and forging a broad range of partnerships. In the early days these included the Richmond Valley Reafforestation Association, the North Coast Trees on Farms Committee, the Northern Rivers Reforestation Committee, the Big Scrub Environment Centre, the Wollongbar Agricultural Institute including its Regional Veterinary Laboratory, the Northern Rivers College of Advanced Education (forerunner to Southern Cross University), the region's Councils, The Northern Star, several private veterinary practices, many schools, and the National Parks & Wildlife Service.

While a few of these organisations no longer exist or have fallen by the wayside, most have endured and strengthened. Over time other valued partnerships have formed. Take for example the wonderful Tony & Lisette Lewis Foundation which has funded most of FOK's vehicles since 2006, the NSW Environmental Trust which has awarded us grants since 2007 or Australia Zoo's Wildlife Hospital and Currumbin Wildlife Hospital which have treated so many of our koalas over the years.

Support for koala recovery has increased dramatically since the Black Summer fires. Today our partners include national and international organisations, most notably, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and more recently the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF Australia) and the Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife.

FOK's wholistic mission of rescuing koalas, regenerating habitat, and providing community education is more important than ever. I extend my sincere thanks to President Susannah and her executive team, the committee, staff, volunteers, members, and supporters who give so much to ensure we deliver that mission effectively.



**Lorraine Vass AM**



# President's Report

## **Our team of volunteers and staff continue to build upon the legacy of Friends of the Koala and realise the potential of future growth.**

Everyone from FOK past and present should be extremely proud of what we have achieved together. Starting with a small passionate group of locals wanting to improve habitat for koalas 35 years ago, we have expanded exponentially to enact koala conservation in every conceivable way. FOK now includes 150 active volunteers, 8 paid staff, as well as a fully functioning 24-hour koala hospital to respond to our hotline and rescue services. Not to mention the swathes of koala food trees propagated in our nursery, with thousands planted by habitat restorers... and that's just the big stuff!

Made possible by IFAW sponsoring our wonderful vet team, the year started out with our long-awaited hospital license being granted. What has changed dramatically is the immediate care FOK can provide on-site for sick and injured koalas. We can now rescue, complete a full veterinary work up, and release healthy koalas the same day which significantly reduces unnecessary stress for koalas.

After the devastating 2019-20 fires WWF helped buy much needed equipment and in conjunction with state and federal government support, helped fund our hospital and facility expansion. Site works have begun and we look forward to the transformation of the grounds.

COVID has been responsible for our inability to open the centre for visitors and educational tours and continues to disrupt our teams of volunteers and staff with border restrictions and lockdowns.

Our Volunteer and Roster Coordinators, Vicki and April, have navigated each restriction with grace and kindness, ensuring every morning and afternoon shift was sufficiently staffed.

The recent improvements at FOK have not only been bricks and mortar. Approximately a year ago, we engaged a Change Manager, Richard Atkin to support FOK to evolve from its humble origins into a financially sustainable organisation. While this has been a challenging task for us all, it has been incredibly exciting to see FOK evolve and build on its significant legacy.

My 10 years with the organisation has been incredible, especially culminating with these last 15 months as FOK's President. Previously the role of President has been a mammoth task, so I am very proud to have reduced this through delegation and simplifying of processes. Vice President, Aliison Kelly, has helped make this possible by enacting an impressive portion of the workload. Alii, you are incredible. Thank you for your constant support and general cheerleading. As I leave the role of President, I am proud of the foundation set and excited to see how FOK continues to expand with its new leadership.



**Susannah Keogh**



# General Manager's Report

I was originally employed as Change Manager to support FOK to evolve from its grassroots origins into a professional, financially sustainable organisation. Now as FOK's General Manager, I am fortunate to build on such an incredible legacy and am inspired by the spirit of our team to provide a much-needed service to the region's koala population.

On my first day in October last year, I was fortunate to be a part of discussions around the support available from three key external partners; Southern Cross University, IFAW and WWF. The dollar value derived from these meetings was close to \$1 million and has been the catalyst for much of my work over the last year. Alongside our invaluable volunteers, this funding has been pivotal to achieve great outcomes for koalas. In any organisation the people are the greatest asset, and this is especially true for FOK, whose large volunteer base offers their valuable time, effort, energy, expertise, and commitment.

## People

Over the last year I have overseen some exciting growth in our staff. Superintendent Vet Dr Jackie Reed and I have been working to upscale the vet services team with IFAW's funding. We've welcomed Research and Partnerships Vet Dr Jodie Wakeman and Vet Nurse Sally Green to support the tireless work of Dr Jackie and Senior Vet Nurse Marley Christian. They've all brought a wealth of experience and FOK now provides rostered veterinary services seven days a week.

We are currently undertaking further recruitment to add another vet and vet nurse to the mix. Additional clinical staff will allow the team to maintain a more effective operating balance, inform the development of volunteer training materials and processes, and feature in partnerships and media engagements as required.

Away from the Koala Hospital, Finance Manager Nicci Carter supports with the increasing demands in this area of the organisation and manages FOK's financial operations.

Looking to the future we will open a new Volunteer and Admin Coordinator position. This role will double as the primary point of contact for our volunteers and members of the public. It will also allow Operations and Communications Manager Claire Agnew to continue her focus on higher level business functions; particularly raising awareness around FOK's work and engaging with potential funding partners.

## Projects

With the support of WWF, we are undertaking a masterplan development project for our site in East Lismore. FOK's rescue and rehabilitation work is aligned with WWF's mission to support local koala populations to double over the next 30 years and the current funding allocation will deliver a more functional hospital and care facility to provide critical support to koalas in the region. We are designing the facility in a responsible, accessible, and sustainable way, with final revisions of plans underway currently.

Our focus over the last 12 months has been increasing the visibility of FOK's work, locally, nationally, and internationally. I've overseen the redesign of FOK's logo, with the preferred design being chosen by members and volunteers. The logo incorporates a more recognisable image of a koala with the shape of a leaf integrated into the design to highlight the broad focus of the organisation across advocacy, animal welfare, and habitat restoration. Following on from this, we undertook a website redesign project to update the look and feel of FOK's primary external engagement tool.





We have revamped our social media presence to increase consistency of voice and messages, while also ensuring that partnerships are appropriately referenced, and diversifying content by profiling the work of individual volunteers. With centralised online communications we will leverage analytics from engagement initiatives to inform the development of future communication strategies.

Traditional media has still been a focus with strong uptake of FOK's stories across print, broadcast, and online media platforms. We've focussed our resources on engaging through mainstream sources and have had our work profiled by the ABC, BBC, Channel 10, Prime 7, NBN, Australian Geographic, The Sydney Morning Herald, and Marie Claire to name a few. As part of the 35 year anniversary of FOK, we are producing a documentary to showcase the contributions of its founding members and celebrating current and future stakeholders.

In terms of our daily volunteer operations, I've also been working with the management committee and staff group to develop and implement updates to policies and procedures across the organisation, creating a safer and more inclusive environment for staff and volunteers. We've also established sub-committee groups, to provide support to our coordinators and opportunities for volunteers to apply their skills more effectively in collaboration with others. While we are still reviewing and refining the various sub-committee structures and functions, the new sub-committee groups have already increased in operational capacity.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Susannah Keogh as President. She has been a source of much wisdom when it comes to our furry little friends

and has supported me greatly in my role, while also being willing to learn and grow herself for the benefit of FOK. I wish her all the best.

Despite the senior nature of my role, I've led this organisation over the last 12 months by supporting and serving its people. The one thing I have tried to impart on the group is the notion of custodianship. We are privileged to have a place in FOK's history, but we don't own it. We are responsible for honouring the legacy of those who have come before us by improving things through our individual contributions and leaving it better for the next group.

At last year's AGM, I was humbled to meet Audrey Hyde, one of FOK's founding members. It was a brief exchange, but I was moved by her sense of wonder and excitement for what the organisation had become. A memorial to her late husband John sits within view of my office window and is a useful reminder of the commitment of others in establishing FOK's proud legacy, which the current group of staff and volunteers is now building upon.

While there remains a lot to be done in setting up FOK for another 35 years of supporting koalas, I'm reminded of a quote from one of my favourite philosophers that I'm hoping will galvanise the current group of members, volunteers, and staff.

"The task ahead of us is never as great as the power behind us." – Emerson



**Richard Atkin**



# Financial Report

It's worth noting that despite the substantial growth over the last 12 months, our cash reserve position has not been impacted. Currently approximately 60% of our ongoing staff costs are covered by external funding contributions. This shows that others also see the value of FOK's work and are willing to invest in the expertise required to build on our valuable objectives.

Due to COVID, there was a reduction in foot traffic through the Education Centre, however this was offset by successful sales of Christmas cards and calendars. The Federal Government also assisted FOK's revenue decline with the Cash flow boost and JobKeeper programs.

Nursery sales experienced a drop of 18% in the 2021FY because of FOK securing a 3-year Bushfire Recovery grant from FNPW. The grant provided \$48,000 to build a new nursery on the condition that the first 80,000 trees would be grown and distributed to landholders with no additional funding. This impacted the profitability of the nursery, but it was expected. The next 2 years of the grant will see improvements as the final 160,000 trees produced will be funded at \$1 per tree by FNPW.

Generous donations from Philanthropic and Individual Trusts increased throughout 2021 as well as business support through donation boxes located throughout Northern NSW. Strategic sponsorships expanded with likeminded organisations and foundations including: The Tony & Lisette Lewis Foundation (Wildlife Link), Southern Cross Botanicals, and Fresh Investment Mountain Cleaning Products (Simply Clean).

Donations also came in from across the world including America, England, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, and Japan. Also, the Adopt a Koala program has grown in popularity and profitability as has membership subscriptions year on year.

On the project front, our work restoring koala habitat to create continuous corridors at Monaltrie/Whyrallah, including Koala Island continues to attract funding with the ongoing financial support of the NSW Environmental Trust, Lismore City Council and the DPIE. The aim is to expand southern koala corridors.

The NSW Environmental Trust, Koala Watch Program completed its third year with a contribution from Tweed Shire Council. This supplemented the previous funding from NSW Environmental Trust, DPIE, Lismore City and Ballina Shire Councils. Thousands of individuals and groups are now cognisant in koala health and habitat awareness.

Our partnership with IFAW expanded with the financial support of full-time veterinary staff to deliver our 24/7 koala hospital in the Northern Rivers region. WWF also supported this goal by providing funding for the new hospital and rehabilitation facilities expansion as FOK widened our investment in state-of-the-art care and recovery equipment.

Security remains a priority at FOK, and the entire East Lismore site received a review and upgrade. Plantation management was also prioritised with the purchase of necessary equipment.

**Nicci Carter, Finance Manager; on behalf of Lindy Brown, Treasurer**





## Public Care Fund

FOK Care Fund has been an endorsed Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) on the Register of Environmental Organisations since 1994 and is entitled to receive tax deductible donations.

In the 2021FY, \$182,502 was raised through the Public Care Fund. \$118,910 of these funds was expended on costs directly related to the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of koalas. This included the operations of the koala hospital, the management of our volunteer workforce, and maintenance of koala food plantations.

After we reinvested the 2021FY surplus of \$62,003 the Public Fund finished the year as at 30th June 2021 with a balance of \$643,234. This money will continue to be invested in the FOK strategic objectives.

The detailed financial statements can be obtained by emailing [accounts@friendsofthekoala.org](mailto:accounts@friendsofthekoala.org)

Revenue	2021 \$	2020 \$	2019 \$
Donations	296,310	841,149	91,293
Fundraising	5,266	2,365	100
Grants	479,992	453,481	111,716
Grants unexpended carried forward	-292,830	-194,368	0
Interest Received	5,891	5,000	3,521
Membership Fees	16,020	11,588	5,930
Merchandise Sales	12,267	9,373	8,775
Nursery Sales	112,922	124,478	63,781
Other Income	18,332	4,036	2,241
Sponsorship	35,476	59,344	15,086
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>689,645</b>	<b>1,316,446</b>	<b>302,443</b>
Other income (incl. unexpended grants)	193,895	70,726	77
<b>Total Revenue &amp; Other Income</b>	<b>883,540</b>	<b>1,387,172</b>	<b>302,520</b>
Expenses	2021 \$	2020 \$	2019 \$
Admin & Advertising Expenses	63,480	25,761	19,511
Audit fees	0	1,450	1,550
Care Centre Expenses	38,998	32,293	30,429
Conferences & Seminar Costs	0	429	4,674
Depn & Amortisation	54,455	28,442	18,765
Fundraising Expense	10,567	5,026	130
Habitat Regen. Works	86,057	95,816	65,973
Koala Medicine & Care Costs	66,308	26,571	42,042
Minor Equipment Purchased	5,098	38,577	0
Motor Vehicle Expenses	13,372	14,033	13,111
Nursery	89,683	93,093	41,677
Project Studies, Surveys, Assessments	0	17	9,999
Superannuation	31,147	13,059	6,348
Wages	352,448	155,201	70,325
Other Expenses	32,447	67,168	19,080
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>844,060</b>	<b>596,936</b>	<b>343,614</b>
<b>Current year surplus attributable to members of the Association</b>	<b>39,480</b>	<b>790,236</b>	<b>-41,094</b>



# Koala Rescue, Rehabilitation and Release

**TOTALS** Admitted: 335 Released: 98 In Care: 4 Died: 233 Gross Release 29%

Total Deaths (admitted or not): 305 Deaths within 24hrs: 199 Rehab Release 72%  
 Total not admitted: 937 Live: 865 Dead: 72 Necropsy: 19 Body Disposal: 17  
 Died before rescuer arrival: 4 Reported sighting as dead: 32

LGA	Admitted	Outcome	Cause of Death
Ballina	29	Released - 10 In Care - 0 Died - 19	Dog attack - 1 Vehicle collision - 2 Disease Chlamydia - 13 Disease other - 2 Storm event - 1
Byron	50	Released - 13 In Care - 0 Died - 37	Dog attack - 1 Attack suspected - 1 Vehicle collision - 4 Dependent on parent taken - 1 Disease Chlamydia - 18 Disease other - 10 Fallen from tree - 1 Unknown - 1
Clarence Valley	7	Released - 1 In Care - 0 Died - 6	Abandoned - 2 Dog attack - 1 Disease Chlamydia - 2 Disease other - 1
Kyogle	24	Released - 6 In Care - 0 Died - 18	Dog attack - 1 Vehicle collision - 1 Disease Chlamydia - 11 Disease other - 5
Lismore	160	Released - 41 In Care - 2 Died - 117	Dog attack - 5 Attack suspected - 1 Vehicle collision - 17 Dependent on parent taken - 1 Disease Chlamydia - 60 Disease other - 30 Fallen from tree - 1 Unknown - 2
Richmond Valley	33	Released - 8 In Care - 1 Died - 24	Abandoned - 1 Dog attack - 1 Vehicle collision - 5 Disease Chlamydia - 9 Disease other - 6 Fallen from tree - 1 Unknown - 1
Tweed	32	Released - 19 In Care - 1 Died - 12	Vehicle collision - 1 Disease Chlamydia - 10 Disease other - 1



## **Friends of the Koala continue to tend to more sick and injured koalas than any other rescue group and wildlife hospital in the state.**

This year we had 335 koalas come into care with a release rate of 29%, which included orphaned/hand raised joeys. We treated koalas that had been attacked by dogs, attacked by cows, hit by cars, and diseased with Chlamydia and koala retrovirus related cancers.

Unlike last year, this summer was extremely wet with unusually low temperatures which affected koalas and their movements. During heavy rains, koalas may spend less time eating and moving between trees. With lack of nutrition, koalas that were mildly unwell became very unwell and come to the ground too weak to climb again. We saw many wasted (emaciated) koalas during the past year.

I have written and implemented some protocols to enable better communication between hotliners, rescue staff and clinic staff. In addition, I ran a one-day workshop for volunteers, teaching them about bushfire burns to koalas, how to triage, assess and bandage, and there was a wet lab where they could practice the bandaging techniques. I aim to make this a yearly event to train volunteers just before summer/bushfire season begins.

New equipment purchased includes an instrument called a tonovet which measures the pressure inside the eye, assessing the severity of conjunctivitis and keratitis. We also purchased a warming cabinet which pre-warms intravenous or subcutaneous fluids to body temperature and warms blankets given on recovery.

We are currently in negotiations to secure the Chlamydia vaccine for Northern Rivers koalas. This vaccine is desperately needed, and it is something I have been working towards since my arrival at FOK. Hopefully, we will be able to start vaccinating soon.

On a sad note, our beautiful three-footed koala Triumph lost his short battle with an aggressive bone marrow cancer likely brought on by koala retrovirus. He was loved around the world for his indomitable spirit, and he will be greatly missed. We provided excellent treatment to make him as comfortable as possible until the very end. Triumph's presence will always live on at FOK.

Looking to the future, we are set to receive a new development of koala runs and hospital extension. We will be able to house more unwell koalas with the additional runs. The hospital extension will have a sterile surgery suite and four ICU rooms, a necropsy/research room, and a laundry/leafing area at the end of the building. These new facilities will also serve as public education and interaction areas.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Keen St Clinic for their assistance when we have reached out, our volunteers who are the heart and soul of the koala care team, my veterinary colleagues both at FOK and those that have provided assistance and advice from Veterinary Specialist Services, Melbourne Eye Vet, Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, and Australia Zoo.



**Dr Jackie Reed,  
Superintendent Vet**

**335**  
**sick, injured,  
and orphaned  
koalas treated**



# Research and Data Management

Our data collection is an asset but probably less understood as the hands-on work with our gorgeous koalas is always more visible. FOK works closely with scientists, councils, and ecologists to save our koalas as a species. Understanding where our koalas are, what condition they are in, and what challenges they may face in various landscapes and situations can only be done by looking back at quality data.

Our huge data set spans back to 1989 and contains over 13,000 koala interactions. Over the past 2 years FOK has partnered with Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) to sift through the database and standardise entries so they can be analysed. Preliminary findings from the study revealed that rehabilitated koalas were able to successfully reintegrate into wild colonies after being released. Once published, the findings will be used to inform upcoming updates to the NSW Koala Strategy.

This detailed overhaul has provided full location information which allows our data to be analysed against maps, giving us a clear visual understanding. How can we challenge applications to destroy habitat, unless we can prove where koalas are in the area and how it will impact them, without data?

I'm proud to be a part of an organisation that can work across many areas of koala protection and rehabilitation. In many sections of this report, you will find members referring to facts and figures that come directly out of our data set.

I would like to sincerely thank the hotline operators, who so often are the first point of data collection, the rescuers and clinical staff who all play a role in building the story of each koala. This forms the reliable data set we use to keep saving our koalas for decades after their event.

**Katrina Jeffery, Data Coordinator**

## Our 35 Year Legacy

Koala Rescue & Rehab	Natural Resource Management
<b>13,000+</b> koala records (over 30 years)	<b>250,000+</b> koala food trees issued
<b>5,000+</b> sick, injured and orphaned koalas tended to	<b>~500,000</b> plants issued including rainforest species
<b>&gt;30%</b> released back to the wild	<b>59ha</b> prime koala habitat restored over the last 6 years



# Community Education and Engagement

## Koala Watch

It was certainly a year of planning, preparing, and cancelling or postponing educational activities. However, we did manage to fit in a few face-to-face activities and some COVID initiatives to keep the local community educated in koala watching and koala awareness.

Between COVID restrictions, education highlights included providing Koala Detective training to 15 Evans Head students from a Year 7 Environment Group doing the Waratah Award. We also delivered an online Zoom session for Koala Detectives to 60 Year 2 students from St Carthage's School in Lismore. These interactive discussions helped students find solutions for living with koalas, particularly ways to minimise the impacts from dogs and cars.

In partnership with Border Ranges Richmond Valley Landcare Network, a koala focussed workshop was held at the Lilyfield Community for 20 participants. I did a Koala Watch presentation, Local Aboriginal Elder Andrew Johnson talked about the cultural connection to koalas and managing land for healthy koala habitat, and Emma Stone talked about various current and upcoming koala conservation initiatives for landholders to be involved in.

Koala Watch Training via Microsoft Teams was provided to 40 State Emergency Services (SES) members. The volunteers learnt how they can help our koalas when responding to fires, storms, and floods. I also did 50 one-on-one or small group (family) rapid Koala Watch training sessions on request or at the time of doing a koala rescue.

The Koala Watch, a community-led koala recovery project has come to an end this year. FOK would like to thank the NSW Government for supporting this project through its Environmental Trust. FOK will continue to deliver Koala Watch training and presentations in the next year as much as possible, both face-to-face and online.

**Maria Matthes, Koala Watch Coordinator**

## Regional Koala Group

The Regional Koala Group (RKG) has grown substantially since its inception in 2016. It started out as a communication focussed group between FOK, local councils, and the State Government. Today the RKG includes 17 different groups from Coffs Harbour to Tweed Heads. The bi-monthly meetings give the different groups an opportunity to come together to discuss the work they are undertaking on saving this species and enhancing habitat across the region.

RKG has run several initiatives including a highly successful Habitat Restoration Webinar and the Hinterland Project. Thanks to funding received from the DPIE, we supported the creation of a database to map and register habitat restoration. Rhonda James from FOK and Marama Hopkins from Tweed Shire Council worked with Dr Peggy Eby for over 6 months on the Northern Rivers Koala Habitat Restoration Archive which has just been launched.

Looking ahead to 2022, DPIE are going to extend the Hinterland Project which has been renamed the Regional Koala Partnership to acknowledge its future direction. The group is also working towards rolling out a coordinated regional communication plan, focussing on seasonally appropriate koala messaging.

FOK would like to sincerely thank the participants from the 17 different groups for their time attending meetings and writing reports. These include: Ballina Shire Council, Bangalow Koalas, Byron Shire Council, Clarence Valley Council, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, DPIE, Envite, IFAW, Kyogle Shire Council, Lismore City Council, Local Land Services, Richmond Valley Council, Rous County Council, Tweed Shire Council and WWF. The RKG proves that like-minded people coming together with a common goal really does make a difference.

**Aliison Kelly, Vice President**



# Habitat Protection and Enhancement

## Funded Projects

There have been many successes with outcomes on the ground and securing funding to restore and expand koala habitat. We are very proud that over the past six years FOK have rehabilitated 59 hectares with >\$567,000 received to create greater connectivity of koala habitat. Below is a summary of four projects completed in the 2020/2021 financial year.

### 1. NSW Environmental Trust \$100,000

This was designated to nine floodplain properties on 9kms of the Wilson River. We implemented fencing to exclude cattle, weeding control (specifically coral trees) and carried out planting with endemic species to enhance wildlife habitat and extend koala corridors. This work was imperative as this river reach has an 'at risk' koala population, ultimately FOK was able to restore 11 kms of koala corridor.

### 2. Lismore City Council \$30,000

Lismore City Council contributed \$30,000 over three years to assist koala habitat restoration work on the Lismore floodplain, Monaltrie to Tucki Tucki. This contribution enabled council to implement three of its management activities from their Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (CKPoM) for South-East Lismore;

1. minimise threats to koalas and their habitat that are not related to development activity;
2. increase the amount of koala habitat in the koala planning area;
3. maintain and where possible improve the quality of existing koala habitat in the koala planning area.

The CKPoM aims to protect the koala population found in the South-East of the local government area (LGA), which is considered one of the most significant on the NSW North Coast.

### 3. Saving Our Species \$10,000

This funding was allocated to two Wyrallah and Monaltrie properties. Funding was used to control woody weeds and exotic vines (the focus being coral trees) on the Wilson River. The work allowed for coral trees to fall and decompose before planting endemic species, mainly forest red gum. This two-stage project was great progress, linking existing and restored koala corridors.

### 4. Community Environmental Program \$20,000

This funding was designed to engage community volunteers working alongside bush regenerators to replace endemic riparian species to replace woody weeds with forest red gums, a preferred koala food tree common on the floodplain and surrounding slopes of Wyrallah properties. The site was fenced with permanent wildlife friendly fencing to exclude cattle.

The authentic progress of these projects can only be measured by the enthusiasm of landowners to bring about change for the benefit of koalas by creating continuous safe corridors. Success will be evident with the presence of koalas on all restored sites.

**Julie Reid, Environmental Project Coordinator**



## Community Nursery

In April we opened our Bushfire Recovery Nursery which was made possible with funding received from the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife (FNPW), the charity partner of Australia's National Parks as part of their Bushfire Recovery Project that aims to have one million trees planted by 2024.

The five nurseries funded are in Southern NSW, Newcastle, ACT, South Australia, and ours servicing Northern NSW. FOK's Bushfire Recovery Nursery is located on land generously donated by Southern Cross University and is allocated to produce 240,000 trees over a three-year period, gifting them to landholders in bushfire affected areas. Thus far the nursery has distributed 34,000 trees to landholders with future orders at 70,000 trees for next year.

Over FOK's entire history, we have issued and planted over 200,000 koala food trees across the region. If we were to include native rainforest species, the number would be closer to 500,000. This recent nursery upgrade will deliver capacity for our community nursery to issue a further 240,000 koala food trees in the next three years. That's double our total number in a tenth of the time!

### Mark Wilson, Nursery Manager



Mark Wilson pictured with Patrick Medley, FNPW

# Advocacy

One of the ways we promote understanding and support for koalas in the Northern Rivers is to articulate the concerns of our members and supporters to those who are responsible for implementing government policy or in a position of influence if policy reform or review is needed. To increase the effectiveness of our advocacy work, an Advocacy Working Group was formed and includes representatives from the five LGAs who have local knowledge of the koala habitat and populations as well as an understanding of the legislation relating to impacts on koala habitat. The group lodged more than 7 submissions relating to development applications that had impacts on koala habitat in Lismore and adjoining LGAs and lodged a submission to the Legislative Council Inquiry into Koalas and Koala Habitat in NSW.

FOK's advocacy work often involves alliances with other environmentally focussed community groups to ensure greater effectiveness. FOK along with other conservation and koala groups met with Cate Faehmann MLC NSW Greens and Cr Katie Milne to express concerns about policy and legislation which will eliminate protection of habitat and discussed combined support for protection of koala habitat on the North Coast.

FOK representatives Lorraine Vass, Rhonda James and Richard Atkin met with Tweed MP Geoff Provest to express concerns on changes to the State Emergency Planning Policy and Local Land Services Legislation. Lorraine gave specific focus to needed government support to implement a koala conservation and recovery plan for the North Coast, while gaining clarification on this region's involvement in the anti-chlamydia vaccine trials. Rhonda James provided detailed suggestions to reinforce koala habitat corridors and fill in habitat gaps that force koalas to traverse areas that make them vulnerable to dog attacks and cars.

## Rhonda James, Committee Member



Afternoon koala care volunteer, Dominique



## Our People

FOK contributes to the social, cultural, and environmental wellbeing of the community by connecting members to a greater cause, contributing to the conservation and enhancement of critical koala habitat, and working positively towards saving koalas across the region.

We have 150 active volunteers who work alongside staff to maintain the rescue hotline, care for koalas, release koalas back into the wild, maintain our koala food tree plantations, collect leaf koalas in care, deliver habitat restoration projects, and advocate for koalas in the region and across the state.

Maintaining volunteer safety on-site throughout COVID lockdowns was critical to sustaining our core business. The provision of care to our koalas was prioritised above community education and other project-related work. More recently, the spike in case numbers resulted in us limiting access to the site for non-essential personnel. This negatively impacted projected outcomes and timelines for numerous projects, however we continue to adapt as required to ensure that operations on-site can continue. We would like to acknowledge and thank our volunteers who make our vital work possible. Without volunteers, FOK could simply not function.

**Claire Agnew, Operations and Communications Manager**

**150**

active volunteers contributed over

**54,000 hrs**

across the organisation this year,  
which is worth more than

**\$1,500,000**



# Our Supporters

Friends of the Koala gratefully acknowledge the generous contributions made by 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.

## Foundation Partners



## Principal Partners



## Project Partners



## Corporate & Community Partners



## Major Donors

Hammond Family Trust  
 Ms. Sheri Walsh  
 Ms. Brenda Martin  
 Count Charitable Foundation  
 NSW Wildlife Council

Skipper Jacobs Charitable Trust  
 Veterinary Specialist Services  
 APS Foundation  
 Friends of the Koala Phillip Island  
 Mr. Guy Farrands

Mr. Terry Jennings  
 Ms. Joanna Husson  
 Mr. George Smith  
 Ms. Melanie Jackson



# Friends of the Koala

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