

# Guideline

*Nature Conservation Act 1992*

## **Communications Guideline: SEQ Koala Rehabilitation Network**

*This non-statutory guideline has been developed to support koala rehabilitators, veterinarians and wildlife hospitals, local governments, and the Department of Environment and Science in their respective roles in the rehabilitation of koalas in South East Queensland. This Guideline should be read in conjunction with relevant legislation, the Code of Practice: Rehabilitation of Sick, Injured, or Orphaned Koalas in Queensland, Guideline: Selection of Release Sites for Rehabilitated Koalas in South East Queensland, and Guideline: Determining Whether a Koala Requires Euthanasia.*

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# South East Queensland Koala Rehabilitation Network

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## 1 Purpose

A dedicated network of wildlife hospitals and volunteer wildlife rehabilitators, provide rehabilitation services for sick, injured, and orphaned koalas in South East Queensland (SEQ). Through these actions, thousands of koalas have been successfully rescued, treated, cared for, and returned to the wild, which would otherwise not have survived.

Communication is key to good outcomes. This guideline has been developed so that all koala rehabilitators, the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network, veterinarians outside of the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network, local governments, and the Department of Environment and Science (department) understand what knowledge and information should be communicated when, and how it should be communicated.

All parties have valuable knowledge and experience regarding koala ecology, habitats, populations, and threats, and the sharing of this knowledge between all parties is key to achieving the best outcomes for koalas. The Queensland Koala Rehabilitators Hub on the department's website provides contact information for each of the relevant parties.

## 2 Shared objective for the SEQ Koala Rehabilitation Network

To work together to ensure appropriate welfare outcomes for sick, injured, or orphaned koalas, and to ensure the combined efforts of all koala rehabilitators, veterinarians, and local and state government, contributes as best as possible to the conservation of koalas within SEQ.

## 3 Communication responsibilities: koala rehabilitators

While the primary responsibility of koala rehabilitators is to conduct rescue, care, and release activities in accordance with relevant legislation (e.g., the Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2017), the Code of Practice: Rehabilitation of Sick, Injured, or Orphaned Koalas in Queensland (the Code of Practice), the rehabilitation permit, and all relevant guidelines, the communication responsibilities of koala rehabilitators include:

- a. When rescuing a koala, ensuring all relevant information is recorded and provided to the treating veterinarian.
- b. When caring for a koala, ensuring all relevant information is recorded, information is provided to the treating veterinarian when requested, and any significant changes in health or behaviour are promptly communicated to the treating veterinarian.
- c. When preparing for a release, working collaboratively with the treating SEQ Wildlife Hospital to identify the most suitable release site for each koala. This includes:
  - i. assessing whether the rescue site is a suitable release site;
  - ii. if the rescue site is **not** suitable for release, assessing the suitability of potential alternative release sites;
  - iii. seeking advice as needed from experienced wildlife rehabilitators and the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network.
  - iv. recording the results of all site assessments, and sharing these with the treating veterinarian or the department if requested; and

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- v. communicating with relevant landholders to ensure permission is obtained to release koalas at the preferred site (e.g., private landholders, local government landholders, the department). N.B. Koalas must **not** be released into a protected area (e.g., a national park) or State forest unless all other release site options have been exhausted, and approval has been obtained from the department. For example, approval from the Ranger in Charge of a national park.
- d. Advising the department if no suitable release site can be identified.
- e. Where the [Release Sites Map](#) requires notes or amendments to best reflect on-ground conditions, ensuring this information is conveyed in a timely manner.

### 4 Communication responsibilities: veterinarians and the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network

#### Veterinarians outside of the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network

Veterinarians are requested to:

- a. Conduct a thorough assessment of any koala that is initially brought to their practice;
- b. Record the following particulars:
  - i. Name of rescuer;
  - ii. Phone number of rescuer;
  - iii. Location of the rescue; and
  - iv. Status of the koala.

These particulars should be sent to the nearest SEQ Wildlife Hospital (Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital, Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, Moggill Koala Rehabilitation Centre, or RSPCA Wildlife Hospital).; and

- c. Following assessment, either:
  - i. Promptly provide pain relief and/or treatment for the koala and coordinate with the nearest SEQ Wildlife Hospital, or the koala rescuer, to promptly transport the koala to the nearest SEQ Wildlife Hospital. In circumstances where pain relief and/or treatment is provided, this information should be recorded and sent to the nearest SEQ Wildlife Hospital; or
  - ii. Advise the rescuer to promptly take the koala to the nearest SEQ Wildlife Hospital; or
  - iii. In necessary circumstances, euthanise the koala in accordance with the Guideline: Determining Whether a Koala Requires Euthanasia.

#### The SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network

In relation to koala rehabilitation, the primary role of the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network is to receive sick, injured, or orphaned koalas, and conduct initial assessments, provide any necessary support, treatment and care, and

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conduct pre-release assessments in accordance with the Code of Practice to determine whether a koala is fit for release. Additionally, the communication responsibilities of the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network include:

- a. Ensuring all relevant information provided by rescuers, carers, and releasers is recorded in the appropriate database, as advised by the department;
- b. Providing carers with a treatment plan for each koala, and ensuring that carers are aware of the circumstances that require a carer to contact the treating veterinarian, or return a koala to the treating veterinarian;
- c. Working with koala rehabilitators to ensure suitable release sites are identified (in advance where possible) for koalas deemed fit for release, including providing advice, if necessary, to assist:
  - i. koala rehabilitators in their assessment of whether the rescue site is a suitable release site; or
  - ii. if the rescue site is **not** suitable for release, koala rehabilitators in their assessment of the suitability of potential alternative release site; and
- d. Where the [Release Sites Map](#) requires notes or amendments to best reflect on-ground conditions, ensuring this information is conveyed in a timely manner.

### 5 Communication responsibilities: local governments

In relation to koala rehabilitation, local governments are responsible for:

- a. Providing advice upon request from koala rehabilitators to conduct proposed rehabilitation activities (e.g., releases) on Council owned and controlled lands;
- b. Providing advice upon request from koala rehabilitators of any potential additional requirements or considerations for their local government area, including preferences for release locations;
- c. Considering advice provided by koala rehabilitators or the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network regarding the [Release Sites Map](#) and advising the department where you support that an area should be added, removed, or amended to reflect on-ground conditions; and
- d. Working with the department to seek agreement on any amendments to the Release Sites Map, as relevant for the local government area.

### 6 Communication responsibilities: the department

The department is responsible for:

- a. Periodically reviewing and publishing relevant legislation, the Code of Practice, guidelines, and departmental web pages;
- b. If necessary, assisting koala rehabilitators, the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network, and local governments to resolve any disagreement on the most suitable release site for a koala;

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- c. Considering advice provided by local government officers (which may include advice received from koala rehabilitators and the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network) regarding the [Release Sites Map](#), to determine whether an area should be added, removed, or amended to reflect on-ground conditions;
- d. Coordinating periodic updates and publishing of the Release Sites Map;
- e. Recording decisions regarding any amendments to the Release Sites Map;
- f. Responding to requests for releases on a protected area or State forest, in last resort circumstances; and
- g. Undertaking compliance checks to ensure that the activities of holders of a rehabilitation permit, or relevant person for the holder is in accordance with legislative requirements, the Code of Practice, the relevant guidelines, as well as any conditions imposed by the permit.

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### 7 Definitions

**Animal** — any member of the animal kingdom (other than humans) as defined in the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

**Code of Practice** — the *Code of Practice: Rehabilitation of Sick, Injured, or Orphaned Koalas in Queensland*.

**Department** — the Department of Environment and Science.

**Guideline** — the *Guideline: South East Queensland Koala Rehabilitation Network*.

**Koala** — a mammal of the species *Phascolarctos cinereus*.

**Koala rehabilitator** — a person who is engaged in the rehabilitation (rescue, care, and release) of sick, injured, or orphaned koalas and is operating under a valid rehabilitation permit either as an individual or as member of a rehabilitation organisation.

**Local government** — the twelve local governments that make up the South East Queensland region, as defined in the South East Queensland Regional Plan, which includes, Brisbane City Council, City of Gold Coast Council, Ipswich City Council, Lockyer Valley Regional Council, Logan City Council, Moreton Bay Regional Council, Noosa Shire Council, Redland City Council, Scenic Rim Regional Council, Somerset Regional Council, Sunshine Coast Council, and the urban extent of Toowoomba Regional Council.

**Orphaned** — a koala that was rescued at a stage of development where it was or would have been dependent on its mother but was kept, fed, and cared for by a person, in place of its mother due to the mother being deceased or temporarily sick or injured.

**Permit** — a rehabilitation permit issued under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

**Protected wildlife** — an animal that is prescribed as such in the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

**Rehabilitation** — a multi-phase process aiming to address the welfare needs of koalas that are found sick, injured, or orphaned, and contribute positively to koala conservation, including rescue, care (if necessary), and release of koalas to the wild, in such a way that they can, where possible, successfully re-join local breeding populations.

**Rehabilitation organisation** — a corporation or association holding a valid rehabilitation permit whose members engage in the rehabilitation of sick, injured, or orphaned wildlife.

**Rescue** — limited to koalas that are, or are reasonably suspected to be, sick, injured, or orphaned, as per section 6.2.2. of the Code of Practice.

**Rescue site** — the location that the koala was rescued.

**SEQ Wildlife Hospital** — a veterinary clinic of the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network.

**SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network** — Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital, Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, Moggill Koala Rehabilitation Centre, and RSPCA Wildlife Hospital.

**SEQ or South East Queensland** — the twelve local government areas that make up the South East Queensland region, as defined in the South East Queensland Regional Plan, which includes, Brisbane City Council, City of Gold Coast Council, Ipswich City Council, Lockyer Valley Regional Council, Logan City Council, Moreton Bay Regional Council, Noosa Shire Council, Redland City Council, Scenic Rim Regional Council, Somerset Regional Council, Sunshine Coast Council, and the urban extent of Toowoomba Regional Council.

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**Veterinary surgeon** — a person registered as a veterinary surgeon under the *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936*.

**Veterinary treatment** — the conduct and application of veterinary surgery and veterinary medicine when applied to sick, injured, or orphaned animals by a veterinarian.

**Wildlife** — a protected animal as defined in the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

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### **Human Rights Act 2019 compatibility**

The department is committed to respecting, protecting and promoting human rights. Under the [Human Rights Act 2019](#), the department has an obligation to act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights and, when making a decision, to give proper consideration to human rights. When acting or making a decision under this Guideline, officers must comply with that obligation (refer to [Comply with Human Rights Act](#)).

### **Disclaimer**

While this document has been prepared with care it contains general information and does not profess to offer legal, professional or commercial advice. The Queensland Government accepts no liability for any external decisions or actions taken on the basis of this document. Persons external to the Department of Environment and Science should satisfy themselves independently and by consulting their own professional advisors before embarking on any proposed course of action.

### **Approved by**

Ben Klaassen

Signature

30 June 2023

Date

Deputy Director-General

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and  
Partnerships

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