



Department of Planning and Environment

# NSW Koala Strategy

Implementation Plan and Progress Report 2021–22



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## Acknowledgment of Country

The development of the NSW Koala Strategy acknowledges more than 60,000 years of continuous Aboriginal connection to the land that makes up NSW.

Aboriginal knowledge and management of the land are based on deep spiritual connections with Country. Country takes in everything within the physical, cultural and spiritual landscape – landforms, waters, air, trees, rocks, plants, animals, foods, medicines, minerals, stories and special places. It includes cultural practice, kinship, knowledge, songs, stories and art, as well as spiritual beings and people: past, present and future.

As part of the world's oldest living culture, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Australian continent and adjacent islands share a unique bond to Country – a bond forged through thousands of years of travelling across lands and waterways for ceremony, religion, trading and seasonal migration.

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## Executive summary

This report summarises the key achievements of the NSW Koala Strategy (the Strategy) in the first year, to 30 June 2022. The report also summarises how each of the Strategy actions will be delivered to 2026. The Strategy builds on the first NSW Koala Strategy (2018–21) and targets efforts to where they will deliver the most effective outcomes.

Much has been achieved since the NSW Government announced an ambitious long-term goal of doubling koalas in NSW, backed by a more than \$190 million investment – the biggest commitment by any government to a single species in Australia.

Great strides have been made towards conserving more koala habitat. More than 2,000 hectares (ha) of high-quality koala habitat have been purchased to add to the national park estate, fulfilling commitments under both the current and previous strategies. Commitments are also in place to purchase a further 1,854 ha.

A total of 3,365 ha of koala habitat will be permanently protected on private land, thanks to the establishment of 58 conservation agreements with private landowners via the Biodiversity Conservation Trust.

As at 30 June 2022, 8 regional partnerships were in development to ensure community expertise and knowledge are informing on-ground actions. Many of these partnerships are now established and delivering much needed conservation work across the state.

An Aboriginal partnership with the Gumbaynggirr community has been renewed, and investment increased, to ensure continued integration of traditional ecological knowledge into koala conservation. Another Aboriginal partnership is in development with the Yuin community on the far south coast.

There has also been significant progress to improve the safety and health of koalas. Vehicle strike mitigation works have started in the Byron, Lismore, Port Stephens and southern Sydney areas. More than 160 vets and vet nurses have received professional wildlife care training, delivered in partnership with Taronga Conservation Society Australia. Significant support has also been provided to wildlife rehabilitators to deal with the impact of flooding at koala rehabilitation sites and to purchase new equipment.

To improve our knowledge of koalas, more than \$1.3 million has been awarded to fund 8 research grants to fill key knowledge gaps identified under the NSW Koala Research Plan. Planning and delivery have also begun for the flagship \$20.5 million program to establish a baseline number of koalas across NSW and measure changes over time.

# Introduction

## Purpose of the document

The purpose of this Implementation Plan and Progress Report is to:

- provide additional information on the implementation of NSW Koala Strategy actions
- summarise the progress made in implementing NSW Koala Strategy actions in year 1 (to 30 June 2022).

A detailed delivery timetable will be included in the next reporting update.

## NSW Koala Strategy

On 9 April 2022 the NSW Government released a new Koala Strategy.

The Strategy is the first in a series of 5-year plans that work towards the Government’s long-term goal of doubling the number of koalas in NSW by 2050.

Developed with input from an independent expert panel, chaired by the Deputy Chief Scientist and Engineer, the Strategy supports a range of conservation actions that will provide more habitat for koalas, support local community action, improve koala safety and health, and build our knowledge to improve koala conservation.

The NSW Government has committed more than \$190 million to deliver the targeted conservation actions that the Strategy sets out, guided by 4 key pillars:



### Pillar 1

Koala habitat conservation

**\$107.1 million**

to fund the protection, restoration and improved management of 47,000 hectares of koala habitat



### Pillar 2

Supporting local communities to conserve koalas

**\$19.6 million**

to fund partnerships across NSW



### Pillar 3

Improving the safety and health of koalas

**\$23.2 million**

to remove threats, improve health and rehabilitation, and establish a translocation program



### Pillar 4

Building our knowledge of koalas

**\$43.4 million**

to fill knowledge gaps and better understand NSW koala populations

## Pillar 1: Koala habitat conservation

Habitat loss and climate change are the most serious threats to koalas. Significant increases in koala habitat area and condition are needed to double koala numbers.

\$107.1 million is being invested to fund the protection, restoration and improved management of more than 47,000 ha of koala habitat.

### Pillar 1 investments and 2026 targets



Up to **15,000 ha** of koala habitat added to the national park estate

Investment: **\$50.3 m**



**7,000 ha** of koala habitat protected on private land

Investment: **\$20.3 m**



**20,000 ha** of koala habitat restoration coordinated

Investment: **\$15.5 m**



**5,000 ha** of box-gum woodland restored

Investment: **\$16 m**



**5x** private sector investment in koala conservation

Investment: **\$5 m**



**1** area of Outstanding Biodiversity Value and **20** Assets of Intergenerational Significance for koalas

### Pillar 1 progress (1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022)

**More than 2,000 ha of koala habitat purchased** to add to the national park estate, fulfilling commitments under both the current and previous strategies. Commitments are also in place to purchase a further 1,854 ha

**3,365 ha of koala habitat permanently protected** on private land, through the establishment of 58 conservation agreements with private landowners

**7,140 ha of state forest in the process of being transferred** to the management of the National Parks and Wildlife Service as flora reserves, fulfilling commitments under the previous strategy

**\$895,000 invested in koala habitat restoration** across the state to increase koala habitat on private and public land

**250,000 tree seedlings set to be planted across 200 ha** of private land in the Northern Rivers as part of the Koala Friendly Carbon Farming Project with World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Australia and Climate Friendly

**Delivered a reverse auction for koala credits** with the process to enable the purchase and retirement of koala credits from the NSW biodiversity credits market underway

**15 Assets of Intergenerational Significance for koalas** declared under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*

## Pillar 1 actions and implementation plan for 2021–26

Action	Description	Implementation
1.1 Permanently conserving priority koala habitat as national parks*	<p>The NSW Government will permanently conserve areas of high-quality koala habitat in strategic locations by adding them to the national park estate.</p> <p>Land that can help establish and secure stronghold areas will be prioritised.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a strategic framework to guide the purchase of high-quality koala habitat</li> <li>• Prioritise acquisitions that help secure habitat within the strongholds and 19 populations for immediate investment, while being flexible enough to allow acquisitions across the broader suite of priority population areas</li> <li>• Purchase properties consistent with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) acquisition framework</li> <li>• Gazette acquired land to formally add it to the national parks system</li> <li>• Consider management requirements of newly acquired land and incorporate into existing management programs</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for joint management areas with Aboriginal communities where appropriate</li> </ul>
1.2 Partnering with landholders to protect koala habitat on private land*	<p>Private landholders with high-quality koala habitat in populations for immediate investment will be supported to permanently conserve their koala habitat. Support will be targeted towards stronghold areas and will occur via 2 programs administered by the Biodiversity Conservation Trust: Conservation Partners Program, and in-perpetuity conservation agreements with annual payments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support landholders to permanently conserve koala habitat through in-perpetuity conservation agreements with the Biodiversity Conservation Trust's Conservation Partners Program and Conservation Management Program</li> <li>• Deliver landholder engagement initiatives and targeted EOI campaigns focused on priority population areas to encourage landholders to participate in private land conservation</li> <li>• Establish a partnership with WWF-Australia to negotiate Biodiversity Conservation Trust conservation agreements in support of Koala Strategy objectives</li> </ul>
1.3 Retiring biodiversity credits	<p>The NSW Government will purchase and retire 1,500 koala credits from the biodiversity credit market, securing in-perpetuity protection for koala habitat.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake an audit and strategic assessment of koala credits on the NSW biodiversity credits market</li> <li>• Run a reverse auction to enable the purchase and retirement of koala credits</li> <li>• Retired credits will be removed from the market and no longer traded, ensuring in-perpetuity protection of koala habitat</li> </ul>

Action	Description	Implementation
<p>1.4 Restoring and managing koala habitat*</p>	<p>The NSW Government will restore 20,000 ha of koala habitat across different tenures, including natural and assisted regeneration and direct planting, supporting local restoration initiatives through regional restoration summits and training for local groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in various restoration activities such as seed collection, seedling purchase, planting, bush regeneration, culturally and ecologically appropriate fire and fencing</li> <li>• Coordinate and strategically plan key areas to be restored according to priority populations and strongholds</li> <li>• Build capacity of partners to deliver restoration projects</li> <li>• Maximise co-investment in restoration projects</li> <li>• Help partners to monitor and maintain restoration sites for the long term</li> </ul>
<p>1.5 Engaging the private sector</p>	<p>The NSW Government will use partnerships to leverage private sector investment in koala conservation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signal the NSW Government’s openness to partnering under the NSW Koala Strategy</li> <li>• Work more closely with the private sector, philanthropists and non-government organisations (NGOs) to identify shared value initiatives</li> <li>• Assess proposals against a partnership framework to ensure probity and due diligence</li> <li>• Leverage investment by building partnerships to secure corporate, philanthropic and conservation organisation support for local and state-wide koala conservation actions</li> </ul>
<p>1.6 Coordinating habitat restoration</p>	<p>The NSW Government will develop a state-wide platform for capturing koala habitat restoration information to enable prioritisation and coordination of koala habitat restoration needs, including bushfire-affected regions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a hub on the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) BioCollect projects platform to capture habitat restoration and natural regeneration data, including all habitat restoration projects funded under this strategy</li> <li>• Develop monitoring guidance to ensure consistency of data</li> <li>• Support and train partners and users to capture and enter data</li> <li>• Use data to inform strategic prioritisation and coordination of ongoing habitat restoration works</li> </ul>



Action	Description	Implementation
1.7 Driving investment through premium carbon markets	The NSW Government will work with private sector partners to deliver ground-breaking premium carbon market projects. Projects will actively regenerate areas of degraded koala habitat. The action will help build business and community confidence in the environmental, social and public co-benefits of premium carbon markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote Australian Carbon Credit Units with koala benefits in Australian carbon markets</li> <li>• Provide Aboriginal land managers and organisations with the opportunity to provide management and monitoring services</li> <li>• Leverage private investment via partnerships with philanthropic and conservation organisations</li> <li>• Identify target areas for koala habitat carbon plantings</li> <li>• Establish monitoring, verification and reporting protocols</li> </ul>
1.8 Box-gum woodland restoration and rewilding	Taronga Conservation Society Australia will partner with the NSW Government to lead the largest ever box-gum woodland restoration and rewilding project. This action will deliver a landscape scale restoration project, creating more than 5,000 ha of climate-change-resilient habitat for koalas and other threatened species. Koalas will be translocated to the site once established.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake spatial analysis to identify candidate regions and koala habitat suitability anticipating a changing climate</li> <li>• Identify and purchase properties for sale and prioritise assessment of lands based on spatial analysis</li> <li>• Undertake restoration works as required, including fencing, ground preparation, natural regeneration, tube stock, multi-species and strata plantings, weed control, and cultural burning</li> </ul>
1.9 Land-use planning initiatives	The NSW Government will direct and support councils to ensure koala habitat values are included in land-use planning decisions through regional plans, local strategic planning statements and local environmental plans. These will be informed by best available koala habitat mapping such as the Koala Habitat Information Base and koala plans of management in priority local government areas. This will mitigate habitat loss and deliver long-term habitat protection for koalas and other species that share their habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include best available data and expert advice on koala habitat values in regional plans</li> <li>• Guide councils on appropriate planning controls for mapped areas of core koala habitat</li> <li>• Develop resources and guidelines for Department of Planning and Environment (the department) Regional Planning Officers and local councils to help ensure Local Strategic Planning Statements and Local Environmental Plans consider koala habitat</li> <li>• Support councils to consult with the department to map and consider appropriate settings for koala habitat in Local Environmental Plans if the council doesn't have a Koala Plan of Management</li> </ul>

Action	Description	Implementation
1.10 Area of Outstanding Biodiversity Value for koalas	The Minister for Environment and Heritage will establish one Area of Outstanding Biodiversity Value (AOBV) for koalas under the Biodiversity Conservation Act. This will help to effectively manage an area that makes a significant contribution to the persistence of koalas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake a desktop review and shortlist potential AOBV sites</li> <li>• Undertake ecological assessments to ensure shortlisted sites meet AOBV criteria</li> <li>• Assess feasibility and alignment with land acquisition and private land conservation programs</li> <li>• Develop a consultation strategy for engagement with relevant stakeholders</li> <li>• Check with relevant public land managers and assess private land impacts</li> </ul>
1.11 Assets of Intergenerational Significance for koalas	The Minister for Environment and Heritage will establish 20 new Assets of Intergenerational Significance (AIS) for koalas under the <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declare key koala habitat as AIS</li> <li>• Prepare Conservation Action Plans (CAPs) for each AIS site, which will                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ identify key risks to the declared area of habitat for koalas</li> <li>○ prioritise actions to reduce risks to koala habitat, such as fire management</li> <li>○ measure and report on the health/population of koalas at each AIS</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

\*Actions continued from the NSW Koala Strategy 2018–21 with new investment

## Pillar 2: Supporting local communities to conserve koalas

Recognising the importance of local and cultural knowledge, the strategy will leverage and build strong partnerships with local councils, community groups, local Aboriginal groups, and conservation organisations.

\$19.6 million is being invested to support local communities to conserve koalas and fund partnerships. These partnerships will help deliver coordinated and strategic conservation actions, prioritise investment and ensure that community expertise and knowledge inform on-ground actions.

### Pillar 2 investments and 2026 targets



Up to **8 regional partnerships** with local councils, conservation groups and Aboriginal communities

**Investment: \$15.7 m**



**10 local councils supported to develop koala habitat maps** using the Koala Habitat Information Base

**Investment: \$3.9 m**

### Pillar 2 progress (1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022)

**8 regional partnerships in development**

- Northern Rivers (\$600,000)
- Northern Tablelands (\$750,000)
- Southern Highlands (\$600,000)
- Southern Tablelands (\$600,000)
- South-west Sydney (\$600,000)
- Mid North Coast (\$600,000)
- Port Macquarie Kempsey (\$600,000)
- Liverpool Plains (\$600,000)

**1 Aboriginal partnership established**

with the Gumbaynggirr community and Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council (\$600,000). Another Aboriginal partnership is in development with the Yuin community on the far south coast

**Koala Smart partnership continued**

recruiting 64 schools. Koala Smart is an education program run by Port Macquarie Tacking Point Lions Club to engage the next generation with local koala conservation

**Country Women’s Association of NSW partnership in development**

to explore new ways to encourage landholders to protect koalas and their habitat

**WWF partnership established**

to deliver private land conservation and habitat restoration initiatives

## Pillar 2 actions and implementation plan for 2021–26

Action	Description	Implementation
2.1 Partnering with regional experts to deliver on- ground actions*	The NSW Government will deliver up to 8 regional koala conservation partnerships with councils, conservation groups, Aboriginal communities and other partners to ensure community expertise and knowledge are informing on-ground actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with councils, schools, Landcare, community groups, NGOs and local experts to expand delivery of multiple aspects of the Koala Strategy in priority regions</li> <li>• Fund and help facilitate implementation of local actions, such as: habitat restoration, private land conservation, dog attack and vehicle strike mitigation, survey and monitoring of habitat and populations, and community engagement and education</li> <li>• Fund dedicated project officers and community engagement in partnership regions</li> <li>• Establish regional workshops or summits to share information and coordinate efforts, based on best practice koala conservation</li> </ul>
2.2 Engaging the community*	The NSW Government will continue to work closely with the NSW community to protect koalas and areas of important koala habitat. Regional partnerships from Action 2.1 will engage communities in local koala actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use regional partnerships and targeted communications channels to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ raise awareness about koalas and their conservation needs</li> <li>○ establish new partnerships in priority areas to support Strategy delivery</li> <li>○ facilitate effective collaboration for coordinated delivery of the Strategy</li> <li>○ build community capacity for driving localised koala conservation priorities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.3 Supporting councils to deliver koala habitat maps	The NSW Government will draw on expertise within Local Land Services and the Environment and Heritage Group to assist local councils to carry out rigorous on-ground ecological assessments and appropriate community consultation to develop koala habitat maps and strategically conserve koala habitat in their local area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide support to councils on the data and methods for koala habitat mapping</li> <li>• Educate councils on how mapping informs conservation and planning decisions</li> <li>• Assist councils to carry out rigorous on-ground ecological assessments and appropriate community consultation, including providing funds for councils to engage ecological consultants</li> <li>• Assist councils to incorporate koala habitat maps in strategic planning instruments such as Local Environmental Plans, Local Strategic Planning Statements, Development Control Plans, regional plans and Koala Plans of Management</li> </ul>

Action	Description	Implementation
2.4 Partnering with the Australian Government and other states	The NSW Government will continue to work collaboratively with state and federal governments to protect koalas throughout Australia. Koala management in other states and work led by the Australian Government can provide useful insights and opportunities for collaboration, such as completing the recovery plan for the listed populations of koalas, and establishing a national monitoring framework for koalas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work closely and collaboratively with Commonwealth and state governments</li> <li>• Share insights and research with Commonwealth and state governments</li> <li>• Use and implement any initiatives that are consistent with the NSW Koala Strategy</li> </ul>
2.5 Working with landholders*	<p>The NSW Government will partner with farming organisations to explore new ways to encourage landholders to protect koala habitat on their land while maintaining agricultural production values.</p> <p>The NSW Government will partner with the Country Women’s Association (CWA) of NSW to develop a dedicated communications and engagement campaign to share practical information with CWA members and regional communities in areas of NSW with koala habitat.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-design a communications and engagement campaign with CWA members to share practical information with regional communities in priority koala populations</li> <li>• Build capacity of CWA members to engage their local communities in koala conservation actions</li> <li>• Create opportunities between local communities and organisations to share koala conservation information</li> <li>• Proactively partner with farming organisations on koala conservation initiatives such as koala paddock tree regeneration</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for koala habitat restoration in the NSW Government’s Sustainable Farming Program’s certification criteria, metrics and actions for agricultural landholders</li> </ul>
2.6 Increasing engagement of schools and local community groups*	The NSW Government will support the involvement of school children and local Lions clubs in koala conservation through the Koala Smart program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial and in-kind support to engage schools in priority koala areas, including via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ digital promotion of Koala Smart</li> <li>○ school visits by koala experts and champions</li> <li>○ contribution to new curriculum materials</li> <li>○ support for community groups to implement local conservation projects</li> <li>○ development of Aboriginal content for Koala Smart</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

\*Actions continued from the NSW Koala Strategy 2018–21 with new investment

## Pillar 3: Improving koala safety and health

Koalas face various threats, including habitat loss and fragmentation, vehicle strikes, disease, dog attacks, fires, drought and heatwaves. Improvements to the health and safety of koalas are required to better protect them from the impact of these threats.

\$23.2 million is being invested over 5 years to remove threats, improve koala health and rehabilitation, and establish a translocation program.

### Pillar 3 investments and 2026 targets



Up to **8 translocation programs** initiated to re-establish koalas

Investment: **\$9.1 m**



At least **10 vehicle strike hotspots** addressed

Investment: **\$10.6 m**



**500+ vets trained** in wildlife care, and rehabilitators supported

Investment: **\$10.6 m**

### Pillar 3 progress (1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022)

<b>Began planning for translocations</b>	to relocate koalas to unoccupied habitat where threats have been removed, and to improve the genetic diversity and health of existing populations
<b>160+ vets and vet nurses trained</b>	via professional Wildlife Treatment and Care courses, delivered through a partnership with Taronga Conservation Society Australia
<b>Mitigation measures supported at 4 vehicle strike hotspots</b>	in Byron, Lismore, Port Stephens and southern Sydney; including variable message signage, fencing, and culvert works to increase habitat connectivity
<b>\$48,000 provided for flood response</b>	supporting 6 community partners to respond to flood impacts at koala habitat restoration sites, including emergency relief actions and rapid site assessments
<b>\$16,000 provided for koala rehabilitation equipment</b>	supporting 6 wildlife rehabilitation providers to acquire koala rescue and rehabilitation equipment
<b>3 koala rehabilitation research papers published</b>	to increase our knowledge on successfully rehabilitating koalas for release back to the wild, in partnership with Science for Wildlife
<b>Conflict Management Toolkit published</b>	to help the NSW Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector handle conflicts and disputes in a fair, timely and consistent way

## Pillar 3 actions and implementation plan for 2021–26

Action	Description	Implementation
3.1 Fixing priority koala vehicle strike hotspots*	The NSW Government will identify and take action at 10 or more vehicle strike hotspots across the State to reduce koala injury and mortality and improve the viability of koala populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Transport for NSW, local councils and rehabilitation groups to identify priority koala vehicle strike hotspots</li> <li>• Address at least 10 vehicle strike hotspots using mitigation treatments including dynamic signage, pavement treatments, roadside maintenance, fencing and crossing structures</li> </ul>
3.2 Addressing attacks by domestic dogs*	The NSW Government will reduce attacks on koalas by domestic dogs by working with local councils to engage dog owners in key areas where attacks occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify local government areas where dog attacks on koalas are a key threat</li> <li>• Work with local councils in priority areas to deliver related local actions, such as communications and community engagement campaigns</li> <li>• Share key lessons and build a better understanding of the best ways to engage, communicate with, and change the behaviour of dog owners</li> <li>• Review and expand the <i>Protecting wildlife from domestic dogs</i> fact sheet</li> <li>• Explore options with councils and NPWS to retrofit 'slippery-top' fencing in residential areas bordering good quality koala habitat</li> </ul>
3.3 Supporting koala rehabilitators*	The NSW Government will continue to support koala rehabilitators by providing ongoing professional development training for volunteer carers and wildlife rehabilitators, and providing equipment and access to transport for injured koalas and other wildlife for rehabilitation groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide targeted funding to koala rehabilitation providers to acquire equipment needed to implement the Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Koalas</li> <li>• Provide ongoing professional development training for volunteers in koala management, rehabilitation and governance practices</li> <li>• Review and update the <i>Koala Rehabilitation Training Standards for the Volunteer Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector</i> and Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Koalas</li> <li>• Develop resources to guide compliance assessment against the standards</li> <li>• Collate koala rehabilitation data and continue to import it into BioNet and SEED</li> <li>• Develop work health and safety resources and a volunteer mentoring program to guide implementation of the code and optimise retention of volunteers in the sector</li> </ul>

Action	Description	Implementation
3.4 Training vets and vet nurses in wildlife care*	The NSW Government will work with Taronga Zoo to continue to deliver professional training in wildlife treatment for vets and vet nurses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to provide a low cost, accredited training program to up-skill veterinary professionals in the treatment, care and rehabilitation of koalas and other native fauna</li> <li>• Subsidise costs of the accredited training program to ensure the program is accessible and drive uptake</li> <li>• Run 2 semesters of professional training program annually, targeting 500 NSW participants over 5 years</li> <li>• Update course content and delivery annually to ensure the program remains current and adopts participant feedback</li> <li>• Maintain program continuing professional development accreditation with the Australian Veterinary Association and Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia</li> </ul>
3.5 Monitoring rehabilitated koalas after release*	The NSW Government will work with wildlife rehabilitators and researchers to monitor rehabilitated koalas released back into the wild.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with researchers and wildlife rehabilitators on post-release monitoring projects</li> <li>• Test and refine the standards for release suitability and site selection to optimise survivability</li> <li>• Develop guidelines and checklists to ensure only healthy koalas are released</li> <li>• Improve assessment of health checks post-release</li> <li>• Collaborate to share and utilise data and key learnings to improve koala outcomes</li> </ul>
3.6 Facilitating chlamydia vaccine trials, translocations and captive breeding	The NSW Government will facilitate the policy and regulatory pathways to support scientific developments to improve the health and viability of koala populations, including for koala chlamydia vaccine trials, captive breeding of koalas, and translocation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and update current policies relevant to koala chlamydia vaccines, captive breeding of koalas for release, and translocation where required</li> <li>• Provide support for new chlamydia vaccine trials in partnership with research institutions</li> <li>• Communicate the relevant policy framework and regulatory processes to provide stakeholders with improved certainty</li> </ul>



Action	Description	Implementation
3.7 Improving our approach to fire management to protect koalas and koala habitat*	The NSW Government will develop bushfire management approaches to better protect koalas and their habitat while also protecting people and property. The government will incorporate traditional ecological knowledge and cultural burning practices into these approaches. Improved understanding of the impacts of hazard reduction burns on koalas will help inform future hazard reduction burns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate traditional ecological knowledge and cultural burning practices into bushfire management approaches</li> <li>• Develop bushfire management approaches to better protect koala populations and their habitat while also protecting life and property</li> <li>• Develop bushfire risk assessment and hazard reduction simulation tools to provide fire planners with the capacity to predict fire severity impacts on koala populations and habitat</li> <li>• Undertake a review of priority bushfire objectives and actions that improve understanding of the response of koala populations before, during and after planned and unplanned fire</li> </ul>
3.8 Improving emergency response actions for koalas and other wildlife	The NSW Government will work with volunteer wildlife rehabilitators, vets and other partner organisations to enhance coordination of emergency response for koalas and other wildlife due to bushfire or extreme weather events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a technical advisor (wildlife) officer into incident management teams to provide wildlife expertise in operational decision-making</li> <li>• Wildlife emergency response taskforces are trained and equipped for rapid deployment to bushfires and other emergencies</li> </ul>
3.9 Translocation program	The NSW Government will use the lessons from previous translocation research to undertake koala translocations. Translocations will be accompanied by special consultation with local Aboriginal groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct feasibility and risk assessments to better understand the complexities of translocations</li> <li>• Partner with research groups and universities to better inform translocation planning and understand translocation outcomes</li> <li>• Establish a koala translocation expert panel to assess licence applications made to translocate koalas in NSW under the <i>NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</i></li> <li>• Undertake 8 koala translocations informed by previous research, consultation with local Aboriginal groups and post-translocation monitoring</li> </ul>

\*Actions continued from the NSW Koala Strategy 2018–21 with new investment

## Pillar 4: Building our knowledge

Establishing a state-wide baseline of population, disease, and genetic information for koala populations is critical to achieving the long-term goal of doubling the NSW koala population by 2050.

Identifying the most appropriate surveying and monitoring methods, and filling important knowledge gaps, is vital for informing strategy actions and evaluating their success.

\$43.4 million is being invested over 5 years to fill knowledge gaps and better understand koala populations.

### Pillar 4 investments and 2026 targets



Baseline data collected for up to **50 koala populations** by 2024 assessing occurrence, distribution, health and genetics

**Investment: \$20.5 m**



Monitoring program at a minimum of **20 sites** creating a dashboard of koala management actions and trajectories

**Investment: \$14.4 m**



Spatial layers updated on the Koala Habitat Information Base

**Investment: \$3.5 m**



Fund priority research projects identified in the NSW Koala Research Plan 2018–28

**Investment: \$5 m**

### Pillar 4 progress (1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022)

**Spatial design for the baseline survey program finalised**

and pilot study commenced to evaluate efficacy and refine sampling methods

**Koala Habitat Information Base updated**

including updates to the vegetation extent layer, the koala Habitat Suitability Model, the Koala Tree Index and the Areas of Regional Koala Significance (ARKS)

**More than \$1.3 m awarded to fund 8 research grants**

to fill key knowledge gaps identified under the NSW Koala Research Plan, including disease, climate change and habitat loss

**Scoping for state-wide genetics and disease baseline commenced**

including undertaking a gap analysis to understand where the information gaps for disease and genetics are

**Support for koala monitoring programs continued**

and a review of the design and methods for future Koala Strategy monitoring programs undertaken

**Drone and camera trap survey methods developed**

with refinements and trials underway

## Pillar 4 actions and implementation plan for 2021–26

Action	Description	Implementation	
4.1	Implementing a state-wide monitoring program	<p>The NSW Government will monitor populations, habitat, disease, genetic diversity and threats at a minimum of 20 sites across NSW, enabling future measurement of progress against the 30-year goal. A dashboard will track the effectiveness of actions delivered under this strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build on the point-in-time baseline survey for some populations and use existing monitoring datasets</li> <li>• Deliver a monitoring program focused on strongholds and priority populations to evaluate trajectories of a minimum of 20 koala populations across NSW, including disease surveillance</li> <li>• Gather site data including koala population trends, habitat use, disease, genetics and threats</li> <li>• Use monitoring data to guide management and investment decisions to achieve stable and secure koala populations</li> <li>• Develop guidance on monitoring for local and regional projects</li> <li>• Provide grants for selected local monitoring projects</li> <li>• Build partnerships to ensure long-term capacity for ongoing monitoring</li> </ul>
4.2	Establish baseline information about koalas	<p>The NSW Government will implement innovative and cost-effective methods to deliver a baseline of the current state-wide occurrence, distribution and relative abundance of koalas within 3 years. This work will also collect baseline health and genetics status in up to 50 koala populations. The program will use the best available science and encourage private sector input.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan and deliver a baseline survey program across the plausible range of koalas in NSW, informed by the best available information on the historic distribution of koalas, habitat characteristics and condition</li> <li>• Evaluate and determine the best combination of survey methods to estimate occupancy and relative abundance across these sites</li> <li>• Assess genetics and disease prevalence at a subset of up to 50 sites</li> <li>• Encourage private sector input through an innovation competition</li> </ul>

Action	Description	Implementation
4.3 Research to support innovation and adaptive management*	The NSW Government will continue to oversee the Koala Research Plan. The NSW Government will incorporate cultural knowledge systems into the plan and coordinate research and data collection on key knowledge gaps. The NSW Government will hold biennial research symposia to review progress and update key knowledge gaps identified in the plan. The research program will seek to leverage significant co-investment from aligned programs such as the Australian Research Council Linkage Program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold a Koala Research Symposium every 2 years to provide an opportunity for a broad range of stakeholders to review the progress of research and have input into research priorities</li> <li>• Revise and update the Koala Research Plan, including incorporating cultural knowledge systems and engaging with experts, researchers and on-the-ground practitioners to develop future research priorities</li> <li>• Seek to leverage co-investment from aligned programs such as the Australian Research Council Linkage Program</li> <li>• Better communicate lessons and information gained through research to stakeholders undertaking management actions</li> </ul>
4.4 Keeping our evidence base up to date	The NSW Government will continue to refine and improve the Koala Habitat Information Base and supporting spatial and mapping products. This will include further refuge modelling to identify areas that may serve as refuges from fire, heat stress or drought.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain and support a state-wide scientific evidence base to improve conservation decisions, including spatial layers that capture the best available knowledge about Koala habitat selection, use and threats</li> <li>• Develop and release an occupancy-driven state-wide Koala Distribution Model and associated products informed by the Baseline survey program</li> <li>• Develop and release new or updated koala spatial layers including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ an updated set of koala Tree Species distribution models</li> <li>○ new Tree Species Indices as indicators of potential koala habitat</li> <li>○ a new integrated Habitat Values Map</li> <li>○ an updated state-wide Koala Habitat Suitability Model (KHSM)</li> <li>○ habitat-related maps that identify areas that may serve as refuges from fire, heat stress or drought</li> <li>○ an updated Areas of Koala Regional Significance (ARKS) map</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4.5 Research into koala responses to intensive harvesting of native forests*	The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) will continue to deliver an independent research project to better understand how koalas are responding to intensive harvesting on the NSW North Coast.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue working with the NRC to investigate how koalas are responding to intensive harvesting on the NSW North Coast</li> <li>• Share information and progress through annual forums with researchers and annual reporting on progress</li> </ul>

Action	Description	Implementation
4.6 Integrating traditional ecological knowledge	The NSW Government will support monitoring on Aboriginal-owned lands and facilitate integration of traditional ecological knowledge into on-ground actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable Elders and the Aboriginal community to be involved in koala conservation and share knowledge and stories if appropriate</li> <li>• Establish and fund at least 2 Aboriginal Partnerships that will have traditional ecological knowledge as a guiding principle in their approach to conserving koalas</li> <li>• Establish a state-wide Aboriginal Advisory Panel to insert Aboriginal perspectives, cultural and community guidance in the implementation and delivery of the NSW Koala Program</li> <li>• Support Aboriginal people within priority koala areas to implement, monitor and evaluate their own koala projects</li> </ul>
4.7 Australian Museum as the biobank for NSW koala genetic material*	The NSW Government will continue to coordinate the delivery of koala genetic material to the Australian Museum through a new phase of sample collection and storage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue supporting and collaborating with the Australian Museum on the collection and storage of koala genetic material in the Australian Museum Koala Tissue Biobank (the Biobank)</li> <li>• Support the Australian Museum to manage genetic data collection, commission and deliver research, contract and manage independent experts, provide annual reports to the NSW Government, and ensure equitable access to data</li> </ul>
4.8 Developing a baseline map of koala genetics	The NSW Government will partner with researchers, communities and other stakeholders to deliver a baseline map of genetic diversity to fill knowledge gaps in the first 3 years. The data will be open source for all researchers and koala rehabilitators to access and build on. This forms part of the baseline survey program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse bioinformation and undertake whole genome sequencing of genetic samples stored by the Australian Museum as host of the Biobank</li> <li>• Collect additional koala genetic samples for genomic analysis</li> <li>• Fund and collaborate with the University of Sydney on the assay and analysis of koala genomic information</li> <li>• Develop a genetic map using approaches consistent with the NSW Koala Strategy Monitoring Framework</li> <li>• Compile this information in collaboration with the University of Sydney and store genetic information in SEED</li> </ul>

Action	Description	Implementation
4.9 Improving the effectiveness of conservation actions	The NSW Government will explore the links between conservation actions and their relative contribution to increasing koala numbers through effective monitoring and evaluation. This work will inform future prioritisation of investment and action. Research will be undertaken to identify least-cost pathways to protecting, restoring and creating habitat by understanding trends in habitat loss, relevant drivers and the likely viability of koala habitat by region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measure and monitor changes in koala habitat to understand trends in koala habitat loss, relevant drivers and likely viability of koala habitat by region</li> <li>• Deliver a Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) Framework for the new Koala Strategy. The MERI framework will review, inform and consolidate lessons across government agencies and actions</li> </ul>
4.10 Recognising the economic and cultural value of koalas	The NSW Government will deliver a study to quantify the market and non-market values of koalas to the NSW community, including cultural, reputational, intrinsic and Aboriginal values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore and where possible quantify the market and non-market values of koalas to the community</li> <li>• Work closely with the Aboriginal Advisory Panel to seek to better understand the Aboriginal cultural value of koalas</li> </ul>
4.11 Innovation and leading the way with cutting-edge technology	The NSW Government will explore innovative ways to incorporate cutting-edge technology in koala conservation, such as thermal detection of koalas using drone technology and novel habitat restoration techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate cutting-edge technology and data analytics into the koala baseline survey, koala monitoring program and other koala management actions under the Strategy</li> </ul>

\*Actions continued from the NSW Koala Strategy 2018–21 with new investment

## More information

- [NSW Koala Strategy](#)
- [Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Koalas](#)
- [Conflict Management Toolkit for the NSW Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector](#)
- [Koala Rehabilitation Training Standards for the Volunteer Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector](#)
- [NSW Koala Research Plan](#)
- [Protecting Wildlife from Domestic Dogs \[PDF 1.4MB\]](#)

Visit [Koala Country](#) to learn more about koala conservation in NSW.