

Annual Koala Report - May 2018

Myall Koala & Environment Group

Quiet Time for Koalas

The past year has been fairly quiet on the koala front in the towns with 104 sightings compared to 126 last year. There was one confirmed sighting of a baby. Surprisingly, there was only one koala sighting in Swan Bay which may indicate that Princess has moved on. She was the long-term resident there with the green tag in her right ear. It is too early to say that this is a long-term downward trend because in the past there have been quiet years followed by a later upturn. One of the reasons that our koalas are generally healthy with good genetic diversity, despite the fact they are an urban population, is that they are able to move freely between the township and the national park to the north thus enabling new animals to come into town. It can sometimes be a few years before new stock appears in town.

Despite this, we do have some concerns about their habitat in town. In the past two or three years there have been many koala food trees cut down in Hawks Nest, firstly as a result of the initial implementation of the Rural Fire Service 10/50 Rule and more recently as a result of storms causing large branches to fall and frightening some residents into removing their trees. Our Group has instituted a new strategy, in conjunction with Council, of planting koala friendly street trees on public land and on verges away from houses (and power lines) to try to replace some of the lost vegetation. Most of the plantings are of Eucalyptus Parramattensis trees which are favoured by koalas and more importantly are attractive and do not grow very tall (about 4 metres).

What's Happening on the Highway?

In the past two years we have experienced a major increase in the number of koalas being hit by vehicles on the highway in our area. Five koala hits have been reported to us between the Viney Creek Road turnoff and Karuah. Miraculously, one of them survived and was saved by an intrepid lady who stopped her vehicle and picked it up next to the median strip. It was taken into care with only fairly minor injuries and was returned to bushland habitat nearby but well away from the highway. Sadly, the other four were killed instantly. We don't know what the reason for this upsurge is or if it is just very bad luck. Perhaps it is koalas looking for mates or possibly escaping the drought affected inland for the coastal vegetation that has received more rainfall.



Parramattensis Beside a common Eucalypt