

Koalas – vehicles and roads

Introduction

Habitat loss from development activities (e.g. housing, roads and agriculture) has meant that koalas now need to cross busy roads more frequently to access resources such as food, water and shelter, and when venturing out to establish new territory of their own. Subsequently, there is a greater chance of serious injury occurring to koalas and road users as result of collisions between vehicles and koalas.

Koalas are most active at night. Drive carefully and pay extra attention in the areas marked with koala signposts.



Photograph courtesy of Tim Fuhlbohm

Vehicle collision involving a koala – what to do

Contact the Koala Information Line on Tel: 8273 5110.

Remember to look after your own safety first - do not place yourself or other road users at risk!

Koala Information Line

The role of the Koala Information Line is to assist callers with incidents involving sick or injured koalas, or orphaned joey koalas. In such cases, the Koala Information Line will contact a Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Duty Ranger, who may arrange for the collection of the koala. The Koala Information Line will require the following information;

- your name and contact telephone number (in case there is a need to contact you),
- the exact location of the koala (e.g. road name and suburb / locality, whether the koala is in a tree or on the ground, nearest landmark),
- the condition of the koala (e.g. behaviour, body condition, obvious signs of injury),
- whether the koala is in a safe location away from the road and moving traffic,
- whether there is any potential risk to human safety given the location of the koala (e.g. the koala is located on the roadside of the South Eastern Freeway, Southern Expressway or in a vehicle emergency stopping lane),
- whether you are prepared to stay with the injured koala and wait for the DENR Duty Ranger to arrive,
- any other information the operator or DENR Duty Ranger may need to know.

Depending on the circumstances the DENR Duty Officer may seek Police assistance to manage the traffic so they can respond to the animal under safer conditions.

Handling injured koalas

Injured koalas require specialised handling otherwise the koala may suffer further injury and stress and the handler may suffer from bites and scratches.

Fate of injured koalas

Injured koalas are assessed by the DENR Duty Ranger. The welfare of the koala is the primary focus - the extent of its injuries will be assessed and used to determine subsequent options for treatment. Some koalas can be released immediately after treatment, whereas others may be kept for 24 hours so their injuries can be treated and their health monitored and re-assessed. Sadly, some koalas have to be humanely euthanased due to the extent of their injuries.

Euthanasia of koalas

Any decision to euthanase a koala is made after careful consideration of the health and welfare of the individual animal and its chances of survival. DENR officers involved in animal euthanasia are professionally trained and treat each animal with care, dignity and respect.