Seeing a koala in the wild in New South Wales is an incredible experience, and one that I want to make sure future generations are also able to share. To achieve this goal, the NSW Government released the NSW Koala Strategy on 6 May 2018, supported by $44.7 million in funding.

The NSW Koala Strategy sets out a range of conservation actions over three years and is the foundation for the Government’s longer-term goal to increase koala populations across the State. It also benefits other native flora and fauna. It is one part of our commitment to ensure our threatened species continue to survive in the wild.

It is exciting to reflect on the progress made over the first year of implementation. When you read through this report, you will see we have already protected more than 6800 hectares of koala habitat. We are supporting communities to take on-ground action to protect their local koala populations and to connect online using a new koala community website.

We have taken steps to enhance the safety of koalas by constructing koala fencing along a busy road in south west Sydney, and we have established the Australian Museum as the official repository for koala genetic material in New South Wales. We have released the 10-year NSW Koala Research Plan and are funding important koala-focused research.

I am inspired by the tireless conservation efforts of communities working on the ground to protect koalas. Community efforts are fundamental to delivering the NSW Koala Strategy. Over the coming year we will be learning from Aboriginal communities how best to protect koala habitat, we will be implementing a statewide koala monitoring program that will involve citizen scientists, and we will be finding ways to better support koala rehabilitators and veterinarians to continue their vital work looking after our sick and injured koalas.

In addition to the NSW Koala Strategy, the NSW Government continues to direct resources to other koala conservation projects. We are funding a new Koala Park and Education Centre in Gunnedah that will deliver koala conservation, as well as a top-class tourist destination. We are funding construction of a koala holding facility near Pottsville, where koalas can be vaccinated against chlamydia. We are also supporting the community in the Northern Rivers region to build a local wildlife hospital.

Thanks to all who have contributed to our achievements during the first year of implementing the NSW Koala Strategy. We look forward to continuing to work together and delivering on our commitments to protect the koala.

The Hon. Matt Kean, MP
Minister for Energy and Environment
An annual meeting was convened with the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer and other Independent Expert Advisory Panel members to review the work completed during this first year of implementation of the NSW Koala Strategy. Their commentary on progress to date and priorities for the coming year informed this annual report.

The Koala Strategy Independent Expert Advisory Panel recognises the considerable work undertaken by the former Office of Environment and Heritage (now Department of Planning, Industry and Environment) and its partners in beginning to implement the NSW Koala Strategy over the past year.

Some highlights include the purchase, protection and conservation of around 6830 hectares of koala habitat, 13 community engagement workshops held across New South Wales that have provided localised insights and actions to mitigate threats to koala populations, and the development of the NSW Koala Research Plan that also drew on significant stakeholder and community engagement.

We see priorities over the next year being:

• Completion, public release and use of the koala habitat information base. This will help guide the purchase of koala habitat and enable strategic land-use planning by NSW Government agencies to protect koala habitat.

• Development and implementation of the NSW Koala Monitoring Plan. Monitoring populations across the State is important to measure the effect of the actions of the Koala Strategy, to further grow the information base with data about NSW koala populations, and to identify where urgent intervention is needed.

• Continue to build the Australian Museum’s koala genetic biobank, by encouraging contributions from all researchers, consultants, rehabilitators, vets and community groups. The ongoing collection, archiving and curation of the samples has the potential to improve the monitoring of the genetic diversity of the koala across New South Wales, enhancing the effectiveness of interventions.

The Panel looks forward to seeing the future developments of the strategy and how it will contribute to the objective of stabilising and increasing koala numbers in the wild over the long-term, ensuring genetically diverse and viable populations across New South Wales.
NSW Koala Strategy at a glance

**Koala habitat conservation**

- Permanently conserve priority koala habitat as national parks
- Protecting koala habitat through new koala reserves
- The Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT) to prioritise koala habitat for funding
- Management of crown land, travelling stock reserves and other public land to conserve high-quality koala habitat
- Government agencies will assess koala habitat values to guide the future use of excess land

**Conservation through community action**

- Deliver local actions to protect koala populations
- Learn from Aboriginal communities on protecting koala habitat
- Develop an online community portal on koalas

**Safety and health of koala populations**

- Create a network of koala and wildlife hospitals and vet services across NSW
- Research project on chlamydia in koalas
- Fix priority koala road kill hotspots across NSW
- Relocation of koalas to unoccupied koala habitat
- Support koala rehabilitators
- Train vets in native wildlife care
- Develop a best practice planning guideline for koalas
- Australian Museum is designated as the biobank to store koala genetic information in NSW

**Building our knowledge**

- Create a statewide koala habitat information base to inform koala conservation decisions
- Statewide citizen science koala survey
- Pilot an app to collect information about koalas
- Koala Strategy monitoring program
- Information collected about koalas can be easily accessed by the community
- Supporting priority koala research
- Research on koala responses to native forest harvesting
- Improving our approach to fire management to protect koalas and their habitat
Purpose of this report

The NSW Koala Strategy is the biggest commitment by any state government to secure koalas in the wild. It sets the foundation for the Government’s longer-term vision to stabilise and increase koala populations across New South Wales.

The NSW Koala Strategy supports a range of conservation actions delivered over three years under four pillars:

- Koala habitat conservation
- Conservation through community action
- Safety and health of koala populations
- Building our knowledge.

This is the first annual report on progress in implementing the NSW Koala Strategy.

The substantial progress in implementing the NSW Koala Strategy during this first year was made possible by the passion and commitment of the community in partnering with the NSW Government. Together, we have established a strong foundation for the continued successful implementation of the strategy over the next two years, and beyond.

The NSW Koala Strategy is a whole-of-government strategy based on the principles of action, ongoing monitoring and continuous learning. We will continue to consider the advice of the independent Expert Advisory Panel, findings from research and monitoring, and ongoing input from implementation partners and the community, to achieve an adaptive management approach. This will help ensure we maximise outcomes for koalas.

Further information about the NSW Koala Strategy can be found at www.environment.nsw.gov.au/koalas
How to get involved in helping koalas

There are many opportunities to get involved in helping save our koalas and other native wildlife. You may want to protect koala habitat on your land, report a koala sighting, volunteer as a wildlife carer or join a community conservation group. You can also manage your dog to help stop dog attacks, and drive carefully through koala habitat to reduce the chance of hitting a koala.

As part of the NSW Koala Strategy, the community has worked together with government to develop a koala community website, NSW Koala Country. This website (koala.nsw.gov.au) includes a range of options and opportunities for how you could be involved in protecting our koalas.

You can report koala sightings


All information in the database is made publicly available through the NSW Government’s Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data (SEED) portal (www.seed.nsw.gov.au/).

You can also participate in the Community Wildlife Survey (www.environment.nsw.gov.au/wildlife-survey). Data from the survey can help identify sites for priority action as well as forming part of koala monitoring across the State.
You can protect koala habitat on your land

| If you have koala habitat on your property and are interested in selling you can contact the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). | Contact the Reserve Establishment Team at OEH.ReserveEstablishment@environment.nsw.gov.au |
| You can get in touch with your Local Land Services office for advice and support about how to manage koala habitat on your land. | More information is available at www.lls.nsw.gov.au |
| You can enter into a voluntary private land conservation agreement with the Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT). There are three types of voluntary private land conservation agreements: | More information about what type of agreement might be right for you is available at www.bct.gov.au |
| • wildlife refuge agreements | |
| • conservation agreements | |
| • biodiversity stewardship agreements. | |

The BCT can advise you about the type of agreement that might be right for you.

You can contact us at koala.strategy@environment.nsw.gov.au to learn more about NSW Koala Strategy actions in your area, or to share your thoughts on opportunities for implementing the strategy.
Koala habitat conservation

6914 hectares of koala habitat protected

2609 hectares of land purchased

4051 hectares of state forest transferred (and another 20,000 hectares in progress)

254 hectares of private land will be covered by new conservation agreements (BCT)

6914 hectares of koala habitat protected

Cudgera Creek Nature Reserve addition
(43 hectares, increasing the reserve by 72%)

Mount Lindesay koala reserve

Lismore-Ballina region – 5 agreements

Gumbaynggirr National Park addition

Willi Willi National Park addition

Port Macquarie region – 5 agreements

Gumbaynggirr National Park addition

Barrington Tops koala reserve

Corraborare koala reserve

Watagan koala reserve

Olney koala reserve

Comleroy koala reserve

Jellore koala reserve

Southern highlands – 2 acquisitions
(2566 hectares linking an existing national park and a nature reserve)

Belanglo koala reserve

Meryla koala reserve
Protecting koala habitat will assist the long-term conservation of koala populations across New South Wales, as well as other native plants and animals, and provide safe homes for rehabilitated koalas being returned to the wild.

How are we managing koala habitat on public land?

A working group comprised of NSW Government’s agencies with responsibility for managing public land across tenures and local council is piloting a project to improve the management of koala habitat across public lands in the Wingecarribee region. After developing a shared understanding of the distribution of threats faced by koalas across tenures in the region, the group is identifying collaborative approaches for more effective management of public land for koala conservation.

As part of the pilot, University of Melbourne is testing strategies that reduce the risk of wildfire to koala habitat, while not adversely impacting the threat of fire to human life, property or other key assets. The university is applying a methodology previously used in the coastal forests of south east NSW.

The group is also exploring ways to add value to habitat restoration on public lands in the region. We expect this landscape-scale, multi-agency approach to koala habitat conservation will provide useful insights that could be applied elsewhere in the State.
Koala land acquisitions

NPWS adopts a strategic assessment approach to inform koala land acquisitions. For a property to be a high priority for purchase under the NSW Koala Strategy, we consider if the:

- property contains koala habitat and evidence of use by koalas
- property is well-connected to surrounding vegetation
- purchase would enable better management of threats to koalas in that location, to lift the resilience of the region’s koalas.

In addition, the property must meet standard requirements for national park acquisition.

For koalas in inland NSW, we are working with koala experts to identify koala refugia. These are areas of koala habitat likely to provide long-term security for koalas in the face of more intense heatwaves and droughts. Once identified, we will consider a range of on-ground options to secure and restore the habitat, by working with landholders and land managers.
Case study: Over 2000 hectares of land purchased in the Southern Highlands

The $20 million koala land acquisition program is a key action under the NSW Koala Strategy. Through this program we are purchasing land containing priority koala habitat to add to the national park estate. Already three properties have been purchased. One of these is Tugalong Station, in the Southern Highlands.

Tugalong was purchased on 31 January 2019. It is a 2164-hectare property nestled between an earlier koala land purchase, and sections of Wollondilly River Nature Reserve and Bangadilly National Park.

Tugalong Station contains high-quality koala habitat. The property sits within the Southern Highlands Link, a habitat corridor that supports an estimated koala population of at least 1000 individuals.

The property is also home to 20 threatened fauna species including glossy black-cockatoos, gang-gang cockatoos, flame robins, speckled warblers, squirrel gliders and several species of microbats.
Priorities for 2019-20

We will protect koala habitat by continuing to purchase land to add to the national park estate. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is currently reviewing expressions of interest received in 2018 from landholders interested in selling their land.

The transfers of state forests identified in the NSW Koala Strategy to the management of NPWS will continue in 2019–20.

The BCT will continue to enter into private land conservation agreements with landholders.

Local Land Services will be developing targeted advice and guidance for landholders who are interested in managing koala habitat on their land.

We will consider lessons from the Wingecarribee public land management pilot (see ‘How are we managing koala habitat on public land?’) to inform management arrangements for public land with koala habitat.

We will be working to ensure koala habitat values of land are considered when the NSW Government is making decisions about whether to divest land considered to be excess to agencies’ needs.

Case study: Landholders protecting koala habitat in Dunbogan

In 2018, Andrew and Nette McCoubrie signed a conservation agreement with the Biodiversity Conservation Trust to conserve over 30 hectares of koala habitat on their property in Dunbogan (in the Port Macquarie region), in perpetuity.

The property is a great addition to the conservation estate. It supports high-quality koala habitat within a local area that has been, and continues to be, impacted by development pressures including clearing for new subdivisions.

The protection of these habitats will also provide benefits to other important biodiversity entities like the threatened wallum froglet, squirrel glider and brush-tailed phascogale.
Conservation of koala habitat on private land

The Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT) supports the conservation of koala habitat on private land. Under its Conservation Management Program, the BCT runs conservation tenders in targeted regions of New South Wales to encourage private landholders with important koala habitat on their property to enter into in perpetuity conservation agreements. Landholders successful in the tender process receive annual payments for implementing conservation actions determined in the agreement.

To date, the BCT is signing five conservation agreements in the Port Macquarie region and five conservation agreements in the Lismore-Ballina region, with a total investment of $7.9 million.

The BCT also enters into private land conservation agreements and makes grants available to landholders with koala populations on their land, to assist with their conservation activities. This is in addition to the targeted koala conservation investment outlined above.
Additional koala projects

2700 hectares of koala habitat is protected as biodiversity stewardship sites

The Biodiversity Offsets Scheme (BOS) commenced on 25 August 2017 under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016. The BOS builds on the previous voluntary BioBanking scheme introduced in 2010 and a mandatory offset scheme for major projects introduced in 2014. The new BOS expands offsetting to local development for the first time.

To date, over 2750 hectares of koala habitat is protected through 17 BioBanking agreements across New South Wales including Western Sydney, Lower Hunter, mid and far north coast, and north west NSW.

Activity in the biodiversity offsets market continues to increase. As understanding and confidence in the market grows, the number of offset sites (called biodiversity stewardship sites under the new BOS) secured in perpetuity will continue to increase.

What is a biodiversity offset?

Biodiversity offsetting is a framework to avoid, minimise and offset impacts on biodiversity from development and clearing, and to ensure land that is used to offset impacts is secured in perpetuity.

Proponents generate a biodiversity credit obligation if they impact on biodiversity.

Landholders can establish a biodiversity stewardship site on their land to generate biodiversity credits to sell to proponents. Biodiversity stewardship sites are funded, managed and protected in perpetuity.
Conservation through community action

13 on-ground actions funded by the NSW Koala Strategy

- 13 workshops
- 236 participants
- 86 local action ideas developed in partnership with the community

Community partnerships will continue to be developed to scope and deliver more on-ground actions.

10 extra conservation actions delivered under the Saving our Species (SoS) Iconic Koala Project

Statewide actions
Fact sheets on mitigating vehicle strike
Guidance for managing dog attack
Habitat restoration guidance
Community engagement and education (SoS)

Highlights 2018–19

- North-East
  - Wild dog impact study
  - 2 conservation projects
  - Aboriginal community day
  - 2 surveys and habitat creation
  - Dunggíidu ngiyaanya ganggaiddi children’s day
  - Recovery partnership
  - Radiotracking project

- North-West
  - Drinking station
  - Habitat restoration Survey

- Greater Sydney
  - Koala festival school education program
  - Survey
  - Conservation project

- South-West
  - Koala count

- South-East
  - 2 conservation projects
  - Development of a conservation group

- On-ground actions funded by the NSW Koala Strategy
- Conservation actions delivered under the SoS Iconic Koala Project
Conservation through community action

Communities across New South Wales love their koalas and are working hard to protect them, using their local information, knowledge and networks.

The NSW Koala Strategy builds on this passion, bringing community groups together to share information and work collaboratively. Actions being delivered by the community will make a difference to koala conservation at the local level.

On-ground actions developed in partnership with the community

Between August 2018 and February 2019, we organised 13 community workshops, bringing together government agencies, community groups, councils and koala experts to identify local priorities for koala conservation.

Participants shared their local experience and ideas for action. Potential priority actions were scoped during each workshop. The table below shows actions being funded under the NSW Koala Strategy. We will continue working with community partners to progress more local actions.
### Local actions funded by the NSW Koala Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrandera Koala Count</td>
<td>A koala expert has been engaged to improve the scientific design and guide citizen scientists on the day of the koala count.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor koala festival school education program</td>
<td>A koala education program is being rolled out across eight local primary schools in the Hawkesbury area, around Kurrajong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Mountains koala survey</td>
<td>Science for Wildlife and Blue Mountains City Council are involving community volunteers in koala survey, habitat mapping and collection of community koala sightings to fill priority knowledge gaps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warralda drinking station</td>
<td>A drinking station has been installed so koalas no longer need to cross a road to access water. This reduces risk of vehicle strike.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor koala festival school education program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Mountains koala survey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warralda drinking station</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathurst and surrounds survey</td>
<td>Koala surveys are addressing priority knowledge gaps about this little studied koala population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffs Harbour Aboriginal community and education day</td>
<td>An Aboriginal community event was held on 24 April 2019 to promote koala conservation in the Coffs Harbour region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunggiidu ngiyaanya ganggaadi (Koala calling us mob) children's days</td>
<td>Aboriginal Elders ran two engagement days on 25 May 2019, where children learn from and with Dunggirr (the koala), to increase Aboriginal youth participation in local koala conservation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armidale radio tracking project</td>
<td>New koala radio tracking collars have been purchased to boost an existing koala monitoring program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East wild dog impact study</td>
<td>The movements of 15 koalas will be tracked with GPS technology to better understand their interactions with wild dogs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far South Coast koala conservation group</td>
<td>A koala conservation group is being established to bring community, agency and other stakeholders together to deliver local koala conservation actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance for managing dog attack</td>
<td>Dog attack guidance will be developed to support local management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact sheets for managing vehicle strike</td>
<td>A series of vehicle strike fact sheets are being developed to support local management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance for habitat restoration</td>
<td>Habitat restoration guidance is being developed to support local management.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Local actions delivered under the SoS Iconic Koala Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Southern Highlands Koala Conservation Project</strong></td>
<td>A three-year partnership between Wingecarribee Shire Council and Saving our Species (SoS) is delivering habitat restoration, reduction of vehicle strikes, landholder and community engagement, and koala monitoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hastings-Macleay Koala Recovery Partnership</strong></td>
<td>A three-year partnership between Port Macquarie-Hastings and Kempsey Councils, Mid North Coast Joint Organisation, Port Macquarie Koala Hospital and SoS. The project is delivering habitat restoration, veterinary care, reduction of vehicle strikes, landholder and community engagement and koala monitoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North East Hinterland Koala Conservation Project</strong></td>
<td>A three-year partnership between Tweed, Byron, Ballina and Lismore Councils, Friends of the Koala and SoS. The project is delivering private land conservation, veterinary care, habitat restoration, landholder and community engagement and koala monitoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Koala habitat creation in Bongil Bongil National Park</strong></td>
<td>Maintenance of newly planted koala habitat to improve connectivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Koala habitat restoration in Gunnedah</strong></td>
<td>Funding is supporting koala habitat restoration on private land to increase habitat connectivity. Funding also supports upgrade and maintenance of koala water stations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Koala conservation in the Southern Tablelands</strong></td>
<td>Koala surveys, fire risk modelling, and a bush fire risk management plan is being developed for the region to reduce wild fire risk for koalas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Koala conservation in the Southern Coastal Forests</strong></td>
<td>Koala habitat restoration is being trialled, fire risk modelling is being undertaken, and koala surveys are being delivered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Koala conservation in the Blue Mountains</strong></td>
<td>Funding is supporting koala conservation in the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury regions led by Science for Wildlife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Koala conservation in Nambucca</strong></td>
<td>Koala habitat management field days are being delivered. A source of koala feed trees is being established – these trees will be provided to landholders to enhance koala habitat on their properties. This project is also supporting Nambucca Council to develop a Koala Management Strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Koala conservation in Bellingen</strong></td>
<td>On-ground habitat restoration is being delivered for priority koala habitat areas by Bellinger Landcare. A local source of koala feed tree stock, for conservation projects across the region, is being developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Koala community engagement and education</strong></td>
<td>SoS has supported or developed a range of materials and activities that promote koala conservation with a wide audience. This includes development of materials for the NSW Koala Country website, and support for the Koala Smart schools project in the Hastings region.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Case study:
NSW Koala Country is connecting koala conservation activities across the State

This year we launched NSW Koala Country (koala.nsw.gov.au), a community website co-designed with a range of stakeholders involved in koala conservation. The site shines a spotlight on koalas in New South Wales and the areas where they are found – NSW Koala Country.

The NSW Koala Country website provides a platform to celebrate koala conservation across the State. It is helping to build a virtual community of koala conservationists and share information about what local koala conservation organisations are doing. The website also shares opportunities for the community to get involved in koala conservation, provides educational reference materials, and provides updates on key NSW Government initiatives.

This is a website for the community, developed by the community. If you have a story or key message to share, please use the Contacts page. The website will be regularly updated to keep content current and relevant.
Priorities for 2019-20

Over the next year we will be engaging and partnering with Aboriginal communities and stakeholders to learn about koala habitat protection, with a focus on enabling cultural burning activities to promote regeneration of koala habitat and to jointly manage koala habitat on public land.

We will also continue to partner with the community to deliver local koala conservation actions.

Case study: Establishing partnerships with Aboriginal communities to support koala conservation in the Coffs Harbour region

More than 40 people attended a community event organised by the Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council in April 2019. The community day showcased koala conservation on Aboriginal lands at Mylestom, adjoining the Bongil Bongil National Park.

This event supported local community education and promoted involvement in protecting koala populations. It is one of the local action projects being implemented under the NSW Koala Strategy.

The event highlighted existing koala conservation work by the Coffs Harbour Aboriginal community, Gumbaynggirr. The day included traditional dance, sharing knowledge, and Dreamtime stories about koalas. It also showcased traditional cultural burning activities that benefit koalas and other threatened species, and provided opportunities for future conservation activities.

Building community awareness helps the Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council in their ongoing koala conservation work. Community involvement is particularly helpful for delivering koala surveys and habitat creation in key areas.
Safety and health of koala populations

Fix priority vehicle strike hotspots

9km of fencing installed by Roads and Maritime Services on Picton Road

Australian Museum is the genetic biobank for koalas

1500 genetic samples received, including 1129 from NSW

51 institutions have contributed

Create a network of wildlife hospitals

June 2019 start of the construction of the Port Stephens koala hospital

Support koala rehabilitators

17 wildlife rehabilitation groups and koala carers received funding to purchase wildlife rescue and safety equipment

Highlights 2018–19

Statewide
- WIRES and carers

North East
- Friends of the Koala
- Koala Hospital
- Port Macquarie
- Northern Tablelands Wildlife Carers
- Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers

North West
- Wildlife Carers
- Network Central West

Hunter/Central Coast
- Port Stephens Koalas
- Native Animal Trust Fund
- FAWNA NSW
- Wildlife in Need of Care
- Wildlife Aid

Greater Sydney
- Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Services

South East
- Wildlife Rescue South Coast
- Wildcare Queanbeyan
- Native Animal Rescue Group
Safety and health of koala populations

Improving the safety and health of koala populations means reducing the number of koalas that need care, as well as increasing the proportion of sick and injured koalas that are successfully rehabilitated and returned to the wild.

This year, we progressed some key actions that will help achieve these outcomes:

- We allocated funding to 17 wildlife rehabilitation providers to help replenish their koala rescue equipment (rescue poles, cages, bags and suitable work, health and safety gear).
- We transferred over 8500 koala records collected by the wildlife rehabilitation sector into NSW BioNet. This data will be used to better inform planning, conservation and wildlife management decisions.
- We published the draft *NSW Volunteer Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy* for public comment. This strategy will strengthen the capacity of the sector to support its volunteers and continue to deliver on-ground services.
- Taronga Zoo has been working in partnership with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, tertiary institutions, vets and wildlife rehabilitators to design a professional development training course for vets and vet nurses in native wildlife care.
- Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) is fixing a priority vehicle strike hotspot on Picton Road (see case study on providing safe koala crossings on Picton Road).
- The Australian Museum is now the designated biobank for storing koala genetic information in New South Wales. We delivered training on genetic sampling and data collection protocols to support koala rehabilitators to contribute vital materials to the biobank.

Case study: Building a new koala hospital in Port Stephens

The construction of the Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary started in June 2019. The sanctuary will include a clinic to care for and rehabilitate sick, injured or orphaned koalas. The sanctuary will also support scientific research and education, to help build knowledge about the local koala population. Once complete, visitors and locals will be able to see koalas up close and stay overnight in unique ecotourism accommodation.

The sanctuary is jointly funded by the NSW Koala Strategy and Port Stephens Council, and is being delivered in partnership with the local koala rehabilitation group, Port Stephens Koalas.

Case study:
Providing safe koala crossing on Picton Road, south west Sydney

Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) is constructing about nine kilometres of koala fencing along Picton Road, in the Wollondilly Shire. The fencing is addressing two known koala vehicle strike hotspots: Allen’s Creek and Cascade Creek. Picton Road bisects primary habitat corridors at this location. At least 28 koalas have been reported hit by vehicles at these hotspots since the first record in 1999, with the majority of reports being in the last three years.

The fencing will channel koalas to existing crossings under the road, where they can use concrete arches, pipes and culverts, including a dedicated koala culvert, to cross safely.

RMS used motion-activated cameras during the spring of 2018 (the koala dispersal season) to record how koalas are using the culverts and other structures to pass under the road. No koalas were recorded using the structures, which was expected as they continued to travel overground across the road before the fencing installation.

Once the fencing is in place, we expect more koalas will be using the structures to safely move through the landscape. RMS will undertake further monitoring for the 2019, 2020 and 2021 dispersal seasons to assess the effectiveness of the fencing in reducing vehicle strike and promoting connectivity via the under-road structures.
In addition to the $44.7 million under the NSW Koala Strategy, the NSW Government continues to direct resources to other important koala conservation projects across the State.

**Pottsville koala holding facility**

Tweed Shire Council will be constructing a holding facility near Pottsville, where koalas in rehabilitation can be vaccinated for chlamydia before being returned to the wild. The NSW Government is contributing $370,000 towards constructing the facility.

Chlamydia is a key threat to health of koalas across NSW. Infection can cause a range of debilitating health issues, including blindness, severe bladder infections, infertility and death. By working with the nearby Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, in Queensland, Council hopes to reduce the levels of chlamydia in northern rivers koalas.

Council is finalising detailed planning and will start construction later in 2019.
Northern Rivers wildlife hospital

The NSW Government has committed $100,000 to support the establishment of a wildlife hospital in the Northern Rivers region, and $35,000 for new equipment for the Friends of the Koala care and research centre at Lismore.

Gunnedah Koala Park and Education Centre

The NSW Government has allocated an extra $6.48 million for a new koala park facility and education centre in Gunnedah.

Gunnedah Shire Council is providing the land for the facility and has funded the feasibility assessments. Council is hopeful construction could start later this year.

In addition to supporting tourism in the region, the facility will deliver koala education, research and conservation. Council is excited to be providing this facility. Although Gunnedah is affectionately known as the ‘koala capital of the world’, in recent years the local populations are thought to be in decline.

Koala conservation is a key consideration in the design of the facility.

‘We want to have the ability for sick and injured koalas to be taken in and cared for as well as providing a top-class koala park experience to visitors, that raises awareness about koala conservation’, says Councillor Chaffey, Gunnedah’s mayor.
Case study: Australian Museum is the biobank for koala genetic information

Under the NSW Koala Strategy, the Australian Museum Koala Tissue biobank has been established as the preferred repository for koala genetic samples in New South Wales. The biobank currently holds over 1500 koala genetic samples sourced from around Australia, including over 1000 from New South Wales.

The biobank continues to grow, with regular donations from veterinarians and wildlife rehabilitators. Over time, as high-quality samples from locations across the State are incorporated, the biobank will become an unparalleled resource of koala genetic information for New South Wales.

Having access to properly curated and stored high quality genetic samples provides researchers with exciting opportunities to better understand our koala populations, including factors driving genetic diversity, local adaptation, and genetic health. The recent sequencing of the koala genome is an example of the ground-breaking research that access to this type of genetic information can support.

In 2018, the Koala Genome Consortium2 published the findings of their successful sequencing of genomes of three koala specimens, one of which was from New South Wales. Scientists have identified 26,558 genes, including those associated with the detoxification of eucalypt leaves and responses to chlamydial infection. This type of research provides unprecedented insights into the unique biology and evolutionary history of this iconic Australian marsupial.

We look forward to scientists continuing their research, drawing on the biobank. This will help us fill critical knowledge gaps to help us better target koala conservation management responses.

2 The Koala Genome Consortium includes 54 scientists from 29 different institutions across seven countries. The Consortium is led by Dr Rebecca Johnson, Director of the Australian Museum Research Institute, and Professor Katherine Belov, University of Sydney. The resulting data is publicly available on global genetic databases.
Our priorities for 2019–20

During the coming year we will develop a **best practice planning guideline** to help limit impacts of development on koalas. We will also identify and progress mitigation measures to address the **next priority vehicle strike hotspot**.

We will finalise the **NSW Volunteer Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy** to guide support for koala rehabilitators.

As set out in the Building our knowledge section of this report, research projects on **chlamydia** in koalas, as well as koala translocation, will be progressing.

Taronga Zoo will be finalising the **professional development training** program for vets and vet nurses, in wildlife care. The first cohort will be trained from mid-2020.

We will also continue to encourage the storing of koala genetic information in the **Australian Museum biobank**, to build a comprehensive resource for scientists to learn more about our koalas.
Building our knowledge

NSW koala research plan

- 86 koala experts collaborated to identify knowledge gaps
- 10-year research plan published
- 10 koala research projects selected for funding in 2019

Koala habitat Information base

- 30,900 trees at 1030 sites surveyed for koalas and their scats
- ‘A review of koala tree use across New South Wales’ published
- Koala habitat information pilot undertaken in the Southern Highlands
- Statewide koala habitat information base in final production stage

Areas where we already had confidence in our knowledge regarding koalas being likely or unlikely to occur

Areas where we have conducted surveys to increase our knowledge regarding koalas being likely or unlikely to occur
Building our knowledge

There is still a lot to learn about koalas in New South Wales. Improving our knowledge is key to identifying how to protect them. In parallel with taking action, a number of research and citizen science initiatives are setting the foundation for future conservation decisions.

A 10-year plan to coordinate research on koalas

The NSW Koala Research Plan sets out clear priorities for research on koalas over the next 10 years.

The key research priorities are grouped under the broad themes of disease, habitat, extreme weather events and other issues including fire and cumulative threats.

The research plan includes specific research streams for investigating the impacts of chlamydia, chlamydia vaccine trials and translocation and relocation of koalas.

Information about research grant recipients is available at: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nsw-koala-research-plan
Case study: Developing the NSW Koala Research Plan

In February 2019 we released a 10-year research plan that sets out a targeted and coordinated way to increase our knowledge of koalas. This research plan will be regularly reviewed and updated throughout its life.

The NSW Koala Research Plan was informed by detailed input from some of the most well-respected koala experts and practitioners in Australia. Building on the findings from the independent review conducted by the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer, and commitments made in the NSW Koala Strategy, the following two key steps informed the research plan:

- **Expert elicitation workshop**: In July 2018, 25 koala experts participated in an elicitation workshop. This workshop helped identify and prioritise key knowledge gaps and identify priority research areas.
- **Koala Research Symposium**: In November 2018, a Koala Research Symposium was held at the Taronga Institute for Science and Learning. Attended by 82 koala stakeholders involved with koala research, management and care, the symposium provided these experts with the opportunity to discuss research priorities, building on the elicitation process.

![Diagram of the NSW Koala Strategy, Research Plan, and Key Knowledge Gaps and Research Priorities Revisited]
Case study: Piloting the koala habitat information base

We are developing a statewide koala habitat information base that will be finalised mid-2019. Landholders and land managers, as well as councils, government agencies, scientists, koala conservation organisations and other stakeholders, will be able to use the information base to inform conservation decisions.

The information base will be available through the NSW Government’s Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data (SEED) portal later this year. The information base is a regionalised product. It presents information on the probability of finding koala habitat within each of the nine koala modelling regions. It calculates this probability by considering a range of data sources including the type of vegetation in the area, environmental variables, and koala records.

A pilot version of the information base has been developed for the Southern Highlands and Southern and Central Tablelands region. Some of the key data layers included in the pilot version include:

- Koala Habitat Suitability Model – the probability of finding koala habitat at any location.
- Koala Tree Suitability Index – the probability of finding a tree species that koalas are known to use for food or shelter.
- Koala Likelihood Map – the chances of finding a koala at a location.

Department of Planning, Industry and Environment piloted the information base during the second half of 2018 and the first half of 2019, to trial ways of using it and seek feedback from potential users of the information. State government agencies and local councils in the pilot area participated. We also provided an overview of the information base at the local community action workshops delivered across New South Wales in 2018 and early 2019. Feedback from the pilot is informing the final statewide product.
Case study: Improving our understanding of koala responses to native forest harvesting

Separate to, but aligned with the NSW Koala Research Plan, the Natural Resources Commission is overseeing a $300,000 independent research program under the NSW Koala Strategy. The goal is to investigate koalas’ responses to intensive harvesting\(^3\) in north coast state forests.

The Commission has selected the following three research projects:

- Nutritional value of koala habitat – led by researchers at the Australian National University.
- Koala diet composition and quality – led by researchers at the Western Sydney University.
- Koala population density using acoustic sensors and DNA – led by researchers at the Forest Science Unit in the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

The Commission will convene an annual forum with program researchers to share and discuss findings and address issues.

For more information about these projects please visit: [www.nrc.nsw.gov.au/koala-research](http://www.nrc.nsw.gov.au/koala-research)

\(^3\) The term ‘regeneration harvesting’ used in the NSW Koala Strategy has been replaced by the term ‘intensive harvesting’ in this report for consistency with the legally-defined terminology used in the Coastal Integrated Forestry Operations Approval (Coastal IFOA). The Coastal IFOA was released in November 2018 and is available at: [https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/native-forestry/integrated-forestry-operations-approvals/coastal-ifoa](https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/native-forestry/integrated-forestry-operations-approvals/coastal-ifoa)
Our priorities for 2019-20

Over the coming months we will finalise and start implementing the statewide, cross-tenure NSW Koala Monitoring Plan. Monitoring will help us understand the impact of management actions, respond to urgent threats, and understand more about koala populations across New South Wales.

Sites are currently being selected and monitoring is scheduled to start in the spring-summer of 2019, during the next dispersal season. The first stage of the monitoring program kicked off with the launch of the statewide community wildlife survey in May 2019.

The statewide koala habitat information base will be completed in mid-2019. This information base will contain the best available data on koala habitat and koala occurrence throughout New South Wales. This comprehensive information base will be an important resource for informing koala conservation decisions.

We will continue to fund research to fill priority knowledge gaps identified in the NSW Koala Research Plan.

We will continue to improve our approach to fire management, to protect koalas and koala habitat. We will build on work initiated during the drafting of the NSW Koala Strategy as well as lessons from the Wingecarribee public land pilot (see ‘How are we managing koala habitat on public land?’).

We will also release a new app, I Spy Koala, making it easy for NSW communities to record where they have seen koalas in the wild.
We look forward to continuing to work with the community and other project partners to implement the NSW Koala Strategy over the coming year. Together we can make a real difference, and help our treasured koalas survive in the wild.

Further information about the NSW Koala Strategy can be found at www.environment.nsw.gov.au/koalas

To learn more about NSW koalas, share information, and find ways to get involved in koala conservation, please visit the NSW Koala Country community website available at www.koala.nsw.gov.au

If you want to learn more about how the NSW Government is working to secure other threatened species in the wild, please visit www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/threatened-species
Koala Strategy actions: status update

This table provides a consolidated summary on the status of all the 24 strategy actions. As at July 2019:

- 20 actions are complete or in progress
- the remaining actions will be progressed during the coming year, building on existing partnerships and projects that are underway.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action and progress</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanently conserve priority koala habitat as national parks</td>
<td>Three properties purchased, totalling 2609 hectares: two properties are in the Southern Highlands and one is on the Tweed Coast. Expressions of interest (EOIs) for offers from Far North Coast, Port Macquarie, Port Stephens, and Southern Highlands closed in December 2018. Assessment of the EOIs is underway.</td>
<td>IN PROGRESS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Protecting koala habitat through new koala reserves | Over 4000 hectares of koala habitat has been added to the national park estate:  
  - 589 hectares of the Oakes State Forest were added to Gumbaynggirr National Park, 35 kilometres west of Nambucca Heads  
  - 1382 hectares of the Mount Boss State Forest, near Wauchope, were transferred as the newly created Kindee Creek State Conservation Area  
  - 2080 hectares of Carrai State Forest, north west of Kempsey, were added to Willi Willi National Park.  
| The Biodiversity Conservation Trust to prioritise koala habitat for funding | 173 hectares of regionally important koala habitat is protected on five private properties in the Port Macquarie region, with another 81 hectares to be protected on five properties in the Lismore-Ballina area. These are being delivered under the BCT’s Conservation Management Program from tender processes in these areas. | IN PROGRESS    |
| Management of crown land, travelling stock reserves and other public land to conserve high-quality koala habitat | A 12-month pilot project is nearing completion. This pilot is developing a collaborative, cross-tenure approach to koala habitat management on public land in the Wingecarribee region. | IN PROGRESS    |
| Government agencies will assess koala habitat values to guide the future use of excess land | This action will be progressed during year two of the NSW Koala Strategy. | STARTING IN YEAR TWO |

NSW Koala Strategy 2018-19 Annual Report
## Conservation through community action

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<tr>
<td>Deliver local actions to protect koala populations</td>
<td>All 12 local community workshops set out under the NSW Koala Strategy are complete. An additional workshop was also held in Bega. 13 local actions have been identified for funding in the 2018–19 financial year. Some are complete, some are in progress, and others are in the final stages of scoping with project partners. This is in addition to 10 local action koala conservation projects, as well as education and engagement initiatives, being progressed under the Saving our Species program.</td>
<td>IN PROGRESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn from Aboriginal communities on protecting koala habitat</td>
<td>This action will be progressed during year two of the NSW Koala Strategy. Two Aboriginal community days have been supported through the strategy’s local actions funding.</td>
<td>STARTING IN YEAR TWO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an online community portal on koalas</td>
<td>The NSW Koala Country community website was released in May. The website is available at <a href="http://www.koala.nsw.gov.au">www.koala.nsw.gov.au</a></td>
<td>COMPLETE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Safety and health of koala populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action and progress</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create a network of koala and wildlife hospitals and vet services across NSW</td>
<td>Port Stephens Council is progressing construction of a koala sanctuary at One Mile Beach. Construction started in June 2019. In partnership with Port Stephens Koalas, council is on track to have the facility operating by December 2019. You can read more about the Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary at: <a href="http://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/live/environment-and-sustainability/wildlife/koalas-in-port-stephens">www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/live/environment-and-sustainability/wildlife/koalas-in-port-stephens</a></td>
<td>IN PROGRESS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Action and progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research project on chlamydia in koalas</strong></td>
<td>IN PROGRESS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| This is identified as a priority for research under the Koala Research Plan. Four research proposals are currently being funded under the NSW Koala Strategy:  
  - Impacts and drivers of chlamydial disease in the koala: relationships between the host, pathogen and environment (University of Sydney).  
  - Vaccination against chlamydiosis: an effective disease management tool in wild populations (University of Sydney).  
  - Improving anti-chlamydial responses in NSW koalas with a chlamydia-koala retrovirus combination vaccine (University of the Sunshine Coast).  
  - New and improved chlamydial treatment to reduce disease burden (University of Technology Sydney). |

| **Fix priority koala road kill hotspots across NSW** | IN PROGRESS |
| RMS started constructing koala fencing on Picton Road, in south west Sydney on 30 April 2019. The fencing is due to be completed in mid-2019. |

| **Relocation of koalas to unoccupied koala habitat** | IN PROGRESS |
| This is identified as a priority for research under the Koala Research Plan. Endeavour Veterinary Ecology Pty Ltd is currently delivering a research project under the NSW Koala Strategy, titled ‘Koala Translocation Review and Recommendations’. |

| **Support koala rehabilitators** | IN PROGRESS |
| Two workshops with rehabilitators were held in the first half of 2018 about koala training standards, and triage and treatment protocols. A draft three-year NSW Volunteer Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy was released for consultation on 28 February 2019. Funds have been allocated to 17 wildlife rehabilitation providers to improve and replenish their koala rescue equipment. |

| **Train vets in native wildlife care** | IN PROGRESS |
| Taronga Zoo is leading the creation of a professional development training course for vets and vet nurses in native wildlife care. Taronga Zoo has completed a review of related courses to identify gaps and inform scope. In February 2019, Taronga Zoo hosted a forum with koala and other wildlife stakeholders to test the initial scope of the proposed course materials. The first two modules of the course (covering an introduction to wildlife treatment and koala care) are ready to pilot over the coming months. |

| **Develop a best practice planning guideline for koalas** | STARTING IN YEAR TWO |
| This action will be progressed during year two of the NSW Koala Strategy. The koala habitat information base, which will be finalised mid-2019, will be a helpful resource to inform the guidelines. |

| **Australian Museum is designated as the biobank to store koala genetic information in NSW** | COMPLETE |
| This action has been delivered – the Australian Museum is now the designated biobank. NPWS provided a training workshop to wildlife rehabilitators on the protocol for collecting genetic material. The focus now is on growing the biobank through donations of samples. |
## Building our knowledge

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Create a statewide koala habitat information base to inform koala conservation decisions</td>
<td>The pilot version of the information base has been developed for the Southern Highlands region and Southern and Central Tablelands. Testing the pilot product with stakeholders is almost complete. The information base for the remainder of New South Wales is being developed, taking account of lessons from the pilot. The statewide product will be complete in mid-2019.</td>
<td>IN PROGRESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot an app to collect information about koalas</td>
<td>The app is under development and will be ready for release in 2019.</td>
<td>IN PROGRESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koala Strategy monitoring program</td>
<td>The monitoring program is being developed and monitoring sites are being selected. Initial site-based monitoring will commence in spring–summer of 2019, when koalas are dispersing and most active.</td>
<td>IN PROGRESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information collected about koalas can be easily accessed by the community</td>
<td>Over 8500 koala records collected by the wildlife rehabilitation sector were transferred into NSW BioNet during the first year of implementation of the strategy. Other koala data will continue to be added, as it is collected.</td>
<td>IN PROGRESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting priority koala research</td>
<td>A research symposium was held in November 2018. The Koala Research Plan and initial call for proposals was released on 28 February 2019. Grants have been awarded to 10 projects this year. Visit <a href="http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nsw-koala-research-plan">www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nsw-koala-research-plan</a> to see the list of research projects being funded.</td>
<td>IN PROGRESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research on koala responses to native forest harvesting</td>
<td>The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) has selected three research proposals for funding. These were announced on 22 February 2019 as part of the NRC research plan. For more information about these projects please visit: <a href="http://www.nrc.nsw.gov.au/koala-research">www.nrc.nsw.gov.au/koala-research</a></td>
<td>IN PROGRESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving our approach to fire management to protect koalas and koala habitat</td>
<td>This action will be progressed during year two of the NSW Koala Strategy, building on work that was initiated during the drafting of the Strategy, as well as the fire management work being progressed as part of the Wingecarribee public land pilot.</td>
<td>STARTING IN YEAR TWO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Photos:
Cover photo, Koala (Phascolarctos cinereus), John Turbill/DPIE
Page 5, Young Koala in Red Rum Forest, Lismore, John Turbill/DPIE
Page 6, Southern Highlands Koala Conservation Project, Stuart Cohen/Bottlebrush Media
Page 7, Koala sculpture trail on the boardwalk at Sea Acres National Park, Lindsay Molker/DPIE
Page 9, Koala (Phascolarctos cinereus), Dan Lunney/DPIE
Page 10, Narrandera Nature Reserve on the banks of Murrumbidgee River, Koala Reserve and locally known as Koala Park, Gavin Hansford/DPIE
Page 11, North rugged section of Tugalong, Karen Eardley/DPIE
Page 12, Koala (Phascolarctos cinereus), Dan Lunney/DPIE; Andrew and Nette McCoubrie, Stuart Cohen/BCT
Page 13, Koala (Phascolarctos cinereus), John Turbill/DPIE
Page 14, Koala at the Koala Hospital, Port Macquarie, David Finnegan/DPIE
Page 16, Warialda koala drinking station, Nikki Adams
Page 19, Volunteers and staff, Nature Nomads, Bundjalung National Park, Nick Cubbin/DPIE
Page 20, Face painting at the community event in April 2019 organised by the Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council, Nathan Brennan/CEO Coffs Harbour Aboriginal Land Council
Page 22, Artist impression of Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary, Jackson Teece
Page 23, Koala fencing is being installed on Picton Road, near Wollondilly, David Chenery/RMS
Page 24-25, Koala (Phascolarctos cinereus), John Turbill/DPIE
Page 26, Koala (Phascolarctos cinereus), Sarah Pulling/DPIE
Page 27, Adult Koala in Red Gum Tree, John Turbill/DPIE; Jedda Lemmon/DPIE
Page 29, Koala (Phascolarctos cinereus), Sharon Wormleaton/DPIE
Page 33, Narrandera Nature Reserve on the banks of Murrumbidgee River, Gavin Hansford/DPIE; Koala (Phascolarctos cinereus), John Turbill/DPIE
Page 34, Jedda Lemmon/DPIE; Koala (Phascolarctos cinereus), Justin Mallee/DPIE
Page 39, Narrandera Nature Reserve, Gavin Hansford/DPIE