

Koala rescue checklist

Guiding volunteers in applying Standards 3.1 and 4.1 of the Code of Practice for Injured, sick and orphaned koalas.

1. Pre-arrival preparation

Information gathering

Prior to attending, I have collected sufficient information to inform the rescue plan:

- I know the number of koalas involved
- I have requested photos of:
 - The koala
 - The tree it is in
 - Any adjacent or connecting trees.
- I have identified whether the koala(s) are:
 - Adults
 - Pouch young or
 - A combination of both.

Location and access

I have confirmed access arrangements and logistical requirements:

- I have obtained the exact location of the koalas
- I have secured landholder permission to enter the property
- I have confirmed whether I need a competent and qualified assistant.

Equipment

I have the necessary safe and/or sterilised equipment to perform the rescue:

- Charged phone with location enabled
- Securable transport carrier
- Blankets, and large towels or canvas bag

- Range of appropriate size pouches
- Reliable heat source and thermometer
- PPE gear (gloves, long sleeved shirt, reflective clothing, hand sanitiser, enclosed shoes)
- Rescue tools (e.g. long flagging pole, hoop net, ladder, safe climbing gear, koala trap).

2. Before attempting rescue

Koala health assessment

I have assessed the risks to the koala and determined it needs rescuing by:

- Conducting a visual distance examination
- Assessing its condition
- Looking out for signs of stress, such as panting, ear-flicking, vocalising and urination.

Important

Not all koalas that appear 'out of place' require rescue. Healthy koalas may be resting, dispersing or temporarily occupying unusual locations, including areas that form their normal home range. Unnecessary intervention can cause stress and harm.

Health and safety

I have assessed its safe for me and my assistant to conduct the rescue:

- Checked weather conditions (avoid extreme heat, storms, or high winds)
- Assessed road traffic, terrain and the nearby power lines
- Wearing the appropriate PPE
- Checked for emergency warnings and advice (e.g. the *Hazards near me* app)
- Confirmed all rescue equipment is safe, appropriate, and in good working order.

3. The rescue

During the rescue, I will:

- Select a rescue method that is appropriate for the koala's location and condition
- Minimise handling time and reduce stress to the koala
- Follow best-practice koala handling, welfare and safety guidelines
- Work efficiently and calmly.

When to suspend or discontinue a rescue

I will stop or reassess the rescue if:

- I have spent more than 10 minutes trying to capture the koala without success
- Koala is showing signs of extreme stress
- I have identified an unacceptable risk or do not feel comfortable continuing.

Review and adjust the rescue plan before proceeding any further

4. Before leaving the site

I have completed the following:

- Checked the surrounding area for a mother koala if rescuing a joey, or if rescuing a female with signs of pouch young
- Recorded the geographic location using GPS or phone's map app
- Identified and recorded the tree species the koala was rescued from
- Taken photos of the tree for later identification
- Recorded any other event details necessary for reporting and handover.

More information

- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) 2025, Code of practice for injured sick and orphaned koalas, NSW Environment and Heritage website
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) 2020, Guidelines for the initial treatment and care of rescued koalas, NSW Environment and Heritage website
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), Koala – Practical techniques in wildlife rehabilitation, Koala capture demonstration, Capturing a koala on the ground [video]

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