



The koala

Draft Saving our Species conservation strategy

Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

This resource may contain images, or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

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Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency Boss Lady Creative Designs created the People and Community symbol.

Cover photo: Koala, *Phascolarctos cinereus* in tree river red gum. Dan Lunney/DCCEEW

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Pathways to healthy Country for koalas

For millennia, Aboriginal people have been the custodians of Country, caring for nature and the koalas that call it home. Koalas are deeply embedded in the cultural, spiritual and ecological knowledge and practice of Aboriginal peoples across New South Wales. For many Aboriginal communities, koalas are viewed as kin, are culturally significant and shape identity, responsibility and connection to Country.

This NSW koala conservation strategy recognises that koala habitat forms part of a living biocultural landscape, where ecological health and cultural wellbeing are inseparable. The connection between traditional custodians and Country is enduring and inseparable from the health of landscapes, waters, skies and all living systems.

The strategy supports healthy Country outcomes for koalas, nature and communities by recognising and supporting Aboriginal values, knowledge, interests, cultural authority, practices and aspirations. Aboriginal land-management practices, refined over millennia, have sustained ecosystems through holistic approaches that integrate cultural, ecological and community wellbeing outcomes.

Conserving koalas means resourcing Aboriginal people to care for Country through ‘right-way science’. This approach recognises Aboriginal knowledge and practices alongside western conservation approaches, as co-equal systems.

Consistent with the NSW Plan for Nature, this strategy supports stronger partnerships that recognise Aboriginal people as rights holders and decision-makers in caring for Country. By recognising cultural authority and valuing shared knowledge, we can achieve better, longer-lasting outcomes for koalas and Country.

‘Together, we can build a Koala Strategy that not only supports koala preservation but also enables the wellbeing and resilience of Country, Aboriginal peoples, cultures and knowledges.’

Koala Aboriginal Advisory Panel, 2026



Observing the biocultural relationship of the koala on Gamilaroi Country. For Gamilaroi people, the koala is a custodian of culture and biodiversity. The koala is seen here protecting the fragile habitat of a riparian zone in an agricultural landscape

The koala: an iconic Australian species

Protecting koalas in New South Wales

The koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) is an iconic species in New South Wales. Koalas occur across much of eastern New South Wales, occupying a diverse range of forest, woodland and modified landscapes. The species is listed as Endangered in New South Wales under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and nationally under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Koalas rely on suitable habitat to meet their ecological needs, including specific eucalypt species for food, and trees that provide shelter and thermal refuge, particularly during periods of heat, drought and extreme weather. Koalas can have large home ranges and exist across multiple land tenures, relying on habitat connectivity to move between patches.

Koalas are subject to a range of interacting pressures that influence their distribution, abundance and long-term viability. Habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation have historically been primary drivers of decline and are now compounded by climate change impacts (such as drought and extreme heat) along with direct sources of mortality such as vehicle strike and disease. These pressures are cumulative and disproportionately impact small or isolated populations. As such, effective conservation requires consideration of both broadscale and local threats.

Why coordinated action is needed

Koala conservation in New South Wales requires strategic, coordinated and landscape-scale action across land tenures, jurisdictions and communities. Koalas are widely valued as part of the state's natural heritage and their conservation contributes to broader outcomes for biodiversity, healthy landscapes, cultural connection and community wellbeing. As a flagship species for forest and woodland ecosystems, effective koala conservation supports a wide range of other native species and ecological communities.

Communities across New South Wales have a long history of caring for koalas. Local knowledge held by communities, landholders, volunteers, councils, conservation groups and Aboriginal people provides important insight into koala occurrence, habitat use and local threats. Working in partnership across government, corporates, communities and non-government organisations extends program reach and impact, leverages innovation and delivers stronger outcomes for species, ecosystems and communities.



Representatives from NSW DCCEW, the Rural Fire Service, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Local Land Services and Landcare checking habitat restoration at a private property in Numeralla. Photo: Thunderbox/DCCEW

Reviewing the NSW Koala Strategy

The development of this strategy has been informed by a robust review of the previous NSW Koala Strategy. This includes feedback received at the NSW Koala Summit and submissions to the *Reviewing the NSW Koala Strategy* discussion paper. Development of this strategy has also been informed by advice from the Independent Koala Expert Panel, the NSW Koala Aboriginal Advisory Panel, and a program evaluation of the NSW Koala Strategy.

The review identified 6 focus areas, which have informed the development of the management themes and actions included in this strategy.

1. Habitat protection and restoration, including the need to address landscape-scale threats from habitat loss and climate change.
2. Data and monitoring, including increased transparency, better data access to inform decision making, and establishing robust monitoring frameworks.
3. Partnerships and collaboration, including the continued need for collaboration and removal of barriers for Aboriginal communities.
4. Koala health, including supporting the wildlife rehabilitation sector and improving the management of chlamydia and other diseases.
5. Aboriginal led conservation work, including resourcing Aboriginal-led conservation planning and practices.
6. Legislative reform, including stronger protections under the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme and changes to chapters 3 and 4 of the State Environmental Planning Policy – Biodiversity and Conservation 2021 (the 'Koala SEPP').



The NSW Koala Summit brought together key stakeholders to discuss future conservation priorities for koalas in New South Wales. Photo: DCCEW

Working towards common goals

Saving our Species is the NSW Government's flagship commitment to threatened species

This koala conservation strategy will be delivered under the Saving our Species (SoS) program. SoS is a NSW Government program that coordinates threatened species conservation on many land types across the state. By combating threats and working with partners and local communities to restore and protect habitat, SoS helps strengthen biodiversity and secure a future for native species. The program delivers conservation action through targeted species recovery, threat reduction, ecosystem restoration, and healthy Country projects.

The NSW Government is strengthening environmental protections to deliver greater outcomes for koalas

The NSW Government is currently working to strengthen environmental protections and deliver commitments to secure habitat for koalas and other threatened species.

The government is strengthening environmental protections within the land management framework through implementation of the NSW Plan for Nature, following statutory reviews of the Biodiversity Conservation Act and the native vegetation provisions of the *Local Land Services Act 2013*. These reforms aim to stop excess land clearing and improve environmental outcomes to put nature on a path to recovery, and help conserve koalas and other threatened species into the future.

Key reform programs that will improve protections and secure habitat for koalas and other threatened species are summarised below.

Aligning with national frameworks

This koala conservation strategy also complements key national and international frameworks and policy initiatives including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019–2030 and the National Recovery Plan for the Koala *Phascolarctos cinereus* (combined populations of Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory).

Strengthening the Biodiversity Conservation Act	The NSW Government is updating the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</i> to support our ambition to set nature on a path to recovery. This includes preventing extinctions and supporting the recovery of threatened species such as the koala.
Releasing a NSW Nature Strategy	The NSW Nature Strategy will set the overarching direction for nature recovery for NSW. The strategy will set long-term targets for activities such as conservation, restoration, threat abatement, and stewardship. Meeting these targets will directly contribute to the long term survival of koalas.
Great Koala National Park	The Great Koala National Park supports effective long-term management and strengthens protection for koalas and other native and threatened species. It aims to permanently protect an estimated population of between 10,300 and 14,540 koalas.
Warranmadhaa National Park	Warranmadhaa National Park will protect up to 1,830 hectares of koala habitat in south-west Sydney. By improving habitat connectivity and strengthening wildlife corridors, it will provide long-term protection for Sydney's largest koala population for future generations.
The future of forestry	The NSW Government is developing an action plan to provide clarity for both industry and local communities on the long-term role of the forestry sector in NSW. The government is also seeking a landscape-scale approval from the Australian Government to address legislative changes that removed an exemption for forestry operations in Regional Forestry Agreement areas from 1 July 2027.
Biodiversity Offsets Scheme	The NSW Government is reforming the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme to ensure impacts to threatened species such as koalas, from development captured by the scheme, are avoided and minimised. The reforms require the scheme to transition to overall 'net positive' outcomes over time, and to improve transparency for approved developments.
Land management framework	As part of Part B of the NSW Plan for Nature, the NSW Government is strengthening the land management framework, informed by advice from the Natural Resources Commission. This includes developing a Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting framework to improve biodiversity outcomes and strengthen protections for threatened species, including koalas.
Wildlife rehabilitation sector regulation and support	The NSW Government is supporting volunteers and the veterinary sector to deliver a high standard of care for sick and injured wildlife, improving outcomes for rescued protected and threatened species, such as koalas.

Delivering the Great Koala National Park

The NSW Government is creating an iconic Great Koala National Park to protect endangered koalas and conserve vital habitat for other threatened species on the mid-north coast.

The park will reserve over 176,000 hectares of state forest and connect with existing national parks and reserves to create a 476,000-hectare reserve – one of the largest in New South Wales. The park will protect a significant population of over 12,000 koalas by preserving large areas of connected high-quality habitat.

The park will also protect:

- 66 threatened animal species, including gliders and glossy black-cockatoos
- 37 threatened plant species, such as spider orchids
- old-growth forests and vital water catchments
- climate refugia for species adapting to a warming world.

The final creation of the Great Koala National Park is dependent on the successful registration of the Great Koala National Park carbon project under the Improved Native Forest Management method.

Prioritising areas for on-ground koala conservation

Where are koalas in New South Wales?

Koala occupancy and abundance is concentrated along the coast and adjacent ranges of New South Wales. They are most common in forested landscapes that contain their preferred eucalyptus species, which provide both food and shelter. In inland areas, the distribution of koalas is more fragmented. Distribution in these areas is linked to habitat islands in agricultural landscapes where the habitat and climate is suitable.

The NSW koala baseline survey program gives a clear and reliable picture of where koalas live across New South Wales. As part of the program, the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water surveyed for koalas across the state to identify where they are likely to be found and how many there are in different areas. Using this data, in 2025, scientists estimated a median population of 274,000 with a 95% confidence interval of 231,000 to 320,000 koalas in New South Wales.

Priority koala populations

The SoS program requires priority management areas to be identified for each landscape species. Priority management areas outline where conservation projects for the species may occur in New South Wales. The priority management areas for koalas are defined by Areas of Regional Koala Significance (ARKS) and surrounding areas of occupied connecting habitat. ARKS are areas of koala habitat with a high confidence of koala occupancy. The ARKS used in this strategy have been updated from previous versions using data from the NSW koala baseline survey occupancy model (2025).

The priority management areas will continue to be updated as new monitoring data becomes available. Although the priority management areas represent important habitat for koalas, they can also be found outside these areas.

The priority management areas are shown in Figure 1.

Priority management areas will be used to guide conservation effort

There are 39 priority management areas for koalas identified in New South Wales. These areas will guide government investment decisions for conservation action to address threats such as habitat loss, fire, vehicle strike or disease management. Specific sites within the priority management areas will be prioritised for targeted conservation action and investment in the implementation plan.

Landscape actions that benefit a broader range of threatened species may extend beyond the boundaries of a priority management area, depending on the aims of the project. For example, Aboriginal-led projects require Country to be viewed holistically, priorities for landscape-scale habitat restoration may offer greatest benefits in areas of connecting habitat, and new information about climate refuge areas may be identified.

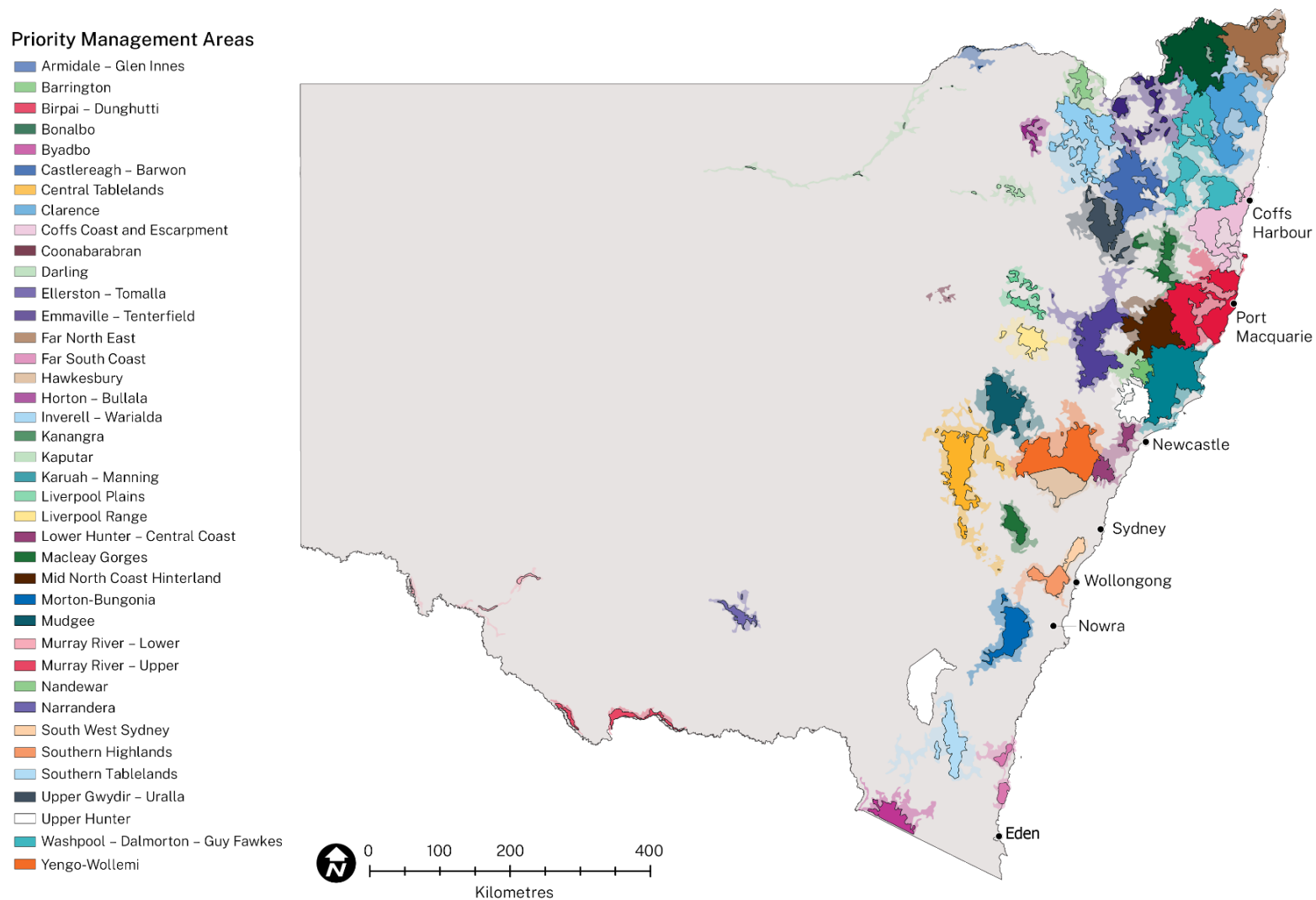


Figure 1 Koala priority management areas, showing individual Areas of Regional Koala Significance (ARKS) and important connecting habitat

Strategy for protecting koalas

Delivering conservation work to benefit a range of threatened species

In line with the commitments in the Plan for Nature, the NSW Government is shifting its conservation approach towards a landscape scale focus. Where possible, conservation work will be planned and delivered to benefit a range of species across a landscape or broader management area. Work will also be delivered across tenures, integrating actions on public and private land and aligning management across jurisdictions, land managers and communities.

In accordance with this approach, many of the actions under management theme 1 will be designed and delivered to benefit both koalas and other threatened species or threatened ecological communities.

Actions to address targeted threats to koalas will also be delivered. These actions are outlined in management theme 2.

This strategy includes the full range of management actions for koalas

As per the SoS program framework for landscape species, the action toolbox below includes the full range of threats and management actions relevant to koalas across New South Wales.

Not all of the actions listed in the toolbox will be funded or delivered by the NSW Government. The toolbox is designed so that other stakeholders, such as councils, private landholders and other government agencies, can fund and deliver actions in priority management areas relevant to them. Priority sites for management action will be identified in the implementation plan.

The toolbox will be updated as needed, for example, in response to new information obtained through monitoring and research, or as emerging threats require active management. This will ensure that conservation efforts remain effective, feasible and cost-efficient over time.

The action toolbox for koalas is at the end of this strategy.

Delivering actions in partnership

The NSW Government is committed to working directly with local communities and key stakeholders to deliver on-ground actions through the strategy.

Partnerships and other collaborative arrangements will guide locally delivered management work and ensure conservation action reflects local priorities and knowledge.

The implementation plan will prioritise sites for targeted management action

Critical threats, and the targeted management actions to address them, will vary between populations across New South Wales. Our data insights and knowledge draw on nearly a decade of research, monitoring, local knowledge and koala conservation work. This collective knowledge means we are now able to identify the critical threats and management actions where relevant for priority management areas.

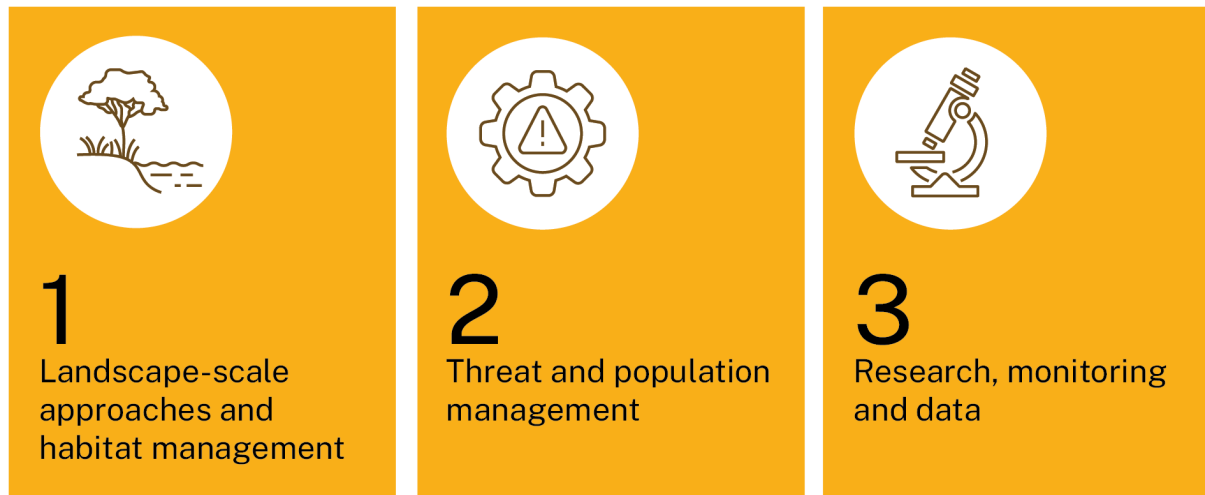
This local knowledge will be captured in a publicly available implementation plan. The plan will identify the relevant critical threats and set out the specific actions needed to address them. This information will guide experts and partners to contribute to conservation efforts in their local area, to address local critical threats to koala populations in a strategic and coordinated way.

The implementation plan will detail the priority management areas and the actions required for the first 3 years of delivering on the koala conservation strategy.

An example of how site-specific threats and management actions will be represented in the implementation plan is provided at the end of this document.

Delivering conservation through targeted management action

Management actions for koalas will be delivered under three management themes.



Management theme 1: Landscape-scale approaches and habitat management

Koalas are reliant on large, connected areas of habitat. Habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation have reduced the extent and connectivity of koala habitat across New South Wales, increasing population isolation and limiting movement, gene flow and access to resources.

Conservation work under this theme will be planned and delivered to benefit both koalas and other threatened species, recognising that:

- koalas move across public and private land and rely on habitat at multiple spatial scales
- habitat quality, condition and connectivity are critical to population viability and genetic exchange
- climate refugia and areas of relative stability will become increasingly important
- broad-scale pressures such as habitat fragmentation and climate change interact with localised threats
- koalas are culturally significant, connected through kinship and cultural pathways across NSW
- habitat conservation has benefits for koalas as well as other species and ecosystems.

Maintaining and restoring connectivity is central to this approach. Connected landscapes support movement, dispersal and breeding, while enabling ecological processes to function at appropriate scales. This increases the resilience of koala

populations and their habitats to disturbance and climate change. Fragmented landscapes limit dispersal, reduce genetic diversity and increase vulnerability to localised impacts such as fire and disease, while constraining population recovery.

What we will do

We will restore threatened species habitat, increase connectivity, and protect high-priority ecological areas for the benefit of koalas, culture and other threatened species and ecosystems.

The actions under management theme 1 are shown in Figure 2.

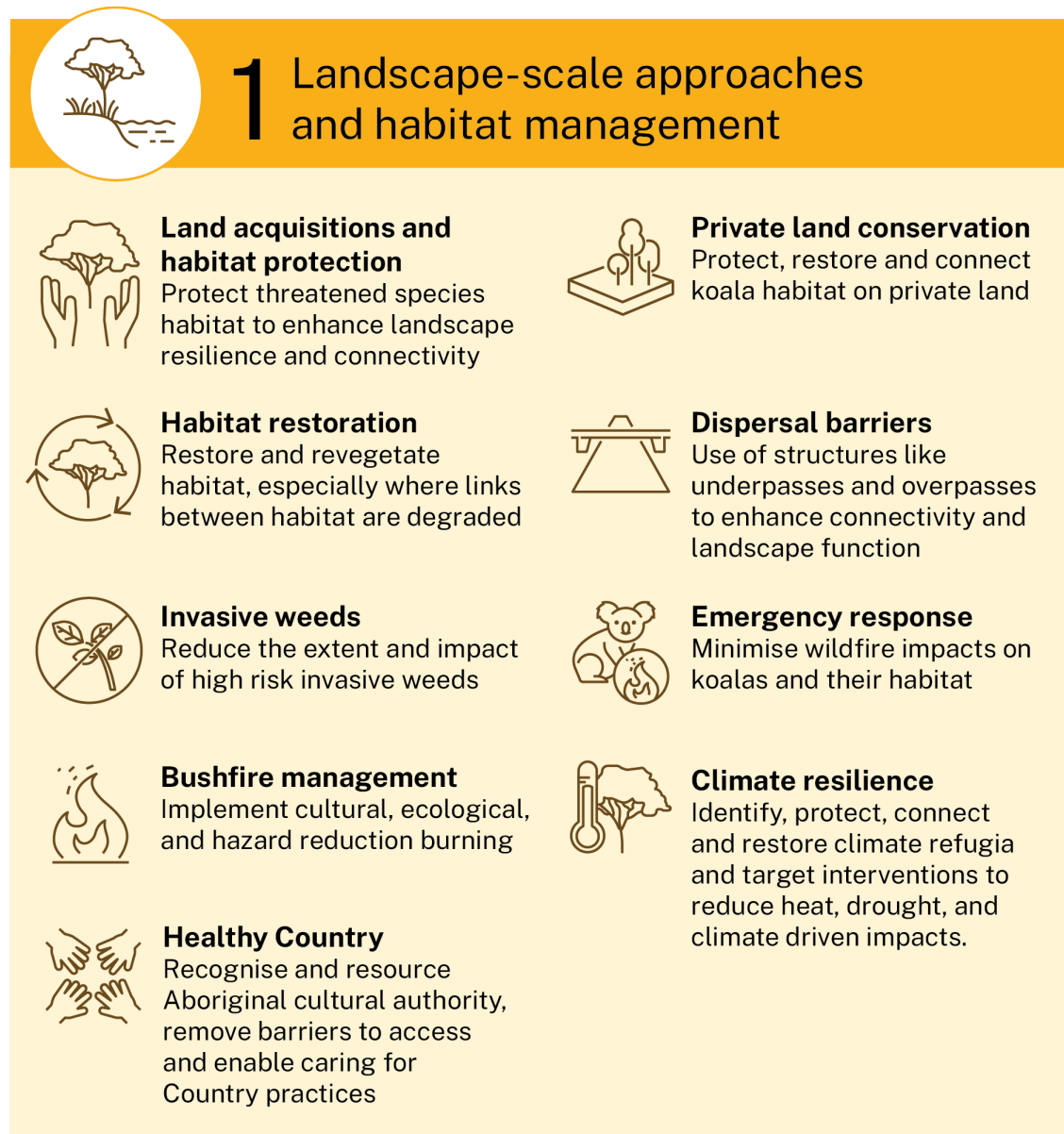


Figure 2 **Actions under management theme 1: Landscape-scale approaches and habitat management**

Management theme 2: Threat and population management

This theme focuses on understanding and managing risks to koala populations across New South Wales, recognising that population dynamics and threat responses vary by location. Targeted management must reflect these differences. Habitat loss and fragmentation remain the primary pressures, associated with development and other land-use change, and are often compounded by inappropriate fire regimes and invasive species. Disease and climate-related stressors are key drivers of decline in some populations, while vehicle strike and domestic animal attack contribute to mortality at local scales.

Improving our understanding of where koalas occur, the critical threats they face, and how these affect koala populations has strengthened how we prioritise management effort across New South Wales.

Complementing this, the koala sentinel program has shown that population health is shaped by interacting ecological, physiological and genetic factors. These findings provide insight into how koalas respond to threats in different landscapes and how management actions can be better targeted.

What we will do

We will deliver appropriate site-specific and targeted management actions needed to abate or minimise local and landscape scale critical threats to koala populations at locations prioritised and included in the implementation plan.

The actions under management theme 2 are shown in Figure 3.



2 Threat and population management



Habitat mapping

Support development of fine-scale habitat maps to inform planning decisions



Education and engagement

Educate, raise awareness and promote conservation actions for koalas and their habitat



Vehicle strike mitigation

Implement actions to reduce injury and mortality from vehicle strike



Reducing dog attacks

Reduce interactions between koalas and domestic animals



Disease monitoring

Monitor, detect and assess disease prevalence and susceptibility in koala populations



Disease management

Prioritise the management of disease in susceptible populations and select the appropriate management response



Conservation translocation

Where appropriate, the NSW Government will reinforce populations to improve gene flow and population demographic representation and dynamics



Population genetics and management interventions

Consider targeted management interventions where risk of local extinction is unacceptable



Supporting wildlife rehabilitation

Support the wildlife rehabilitation sector to improve their capacity to care for rescued, sick and injured koalas



Post-release monitoring

Advance research and refine care to improve survival and recovery outcomes for rescued koalas

Figure 3 Actions under management theme 2: Threat and population management

Management theme 3: Research, monitoring and data

Robust, accessible and up-to-date data is needed to improve our understanding of koala distribution, habitat condition, population trends and threats, particularly in the face of ongoing habitat loss and degradation.

Long-term, standardised monitoring programs are essential for tracking changes over time, evaluating the effectiveness of conservation actions and enabling adaptive management. Targeted research, undertaken in partnership with land managers, research institutions and Aboriginal communities, is needed to address key knowledge gaps in koala ecology, population dynamics, threat impacts and management approaches. Strengthening biocultural monitoring and integrating scientific, cultural and spatial data will provide a more holistic understanding of koala landscapes.

Together, improved data collection, research and predictive modelling will support evidence-based decision-making, help prioritise conservation investment and guide strategic actions to improve koala outcomes across local, regional and statewide scales.

What we will do

We will continue to develop, maintain and share high-quality koala data and habitat spatial information to support evidence-based decision-making, adaptive management and conservation planning across New South Wales.

We will continue to deliver the NSW koala monitoring program while ensuring methods align with multi-species monitoring approaches, to improve our understanding of population trends, habitat condition and conservation outcomes.

We will work with land managers, research organisations, Aboriginal organisations and communities to strengthen knowledge of koala ecology, population dynamics, threat impacts and effective management actions. We will support Aboriginal-led biocultural monitoring and right-way science approaches.

The actions under management theme 3 are shown Figure 4.



3 Research, monitoring and data



Data and spatial tools

Produce high quality habitat maps and habitat spatial products



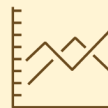
Research

Undertake research to inform on ground actions and policy



Population monitoring

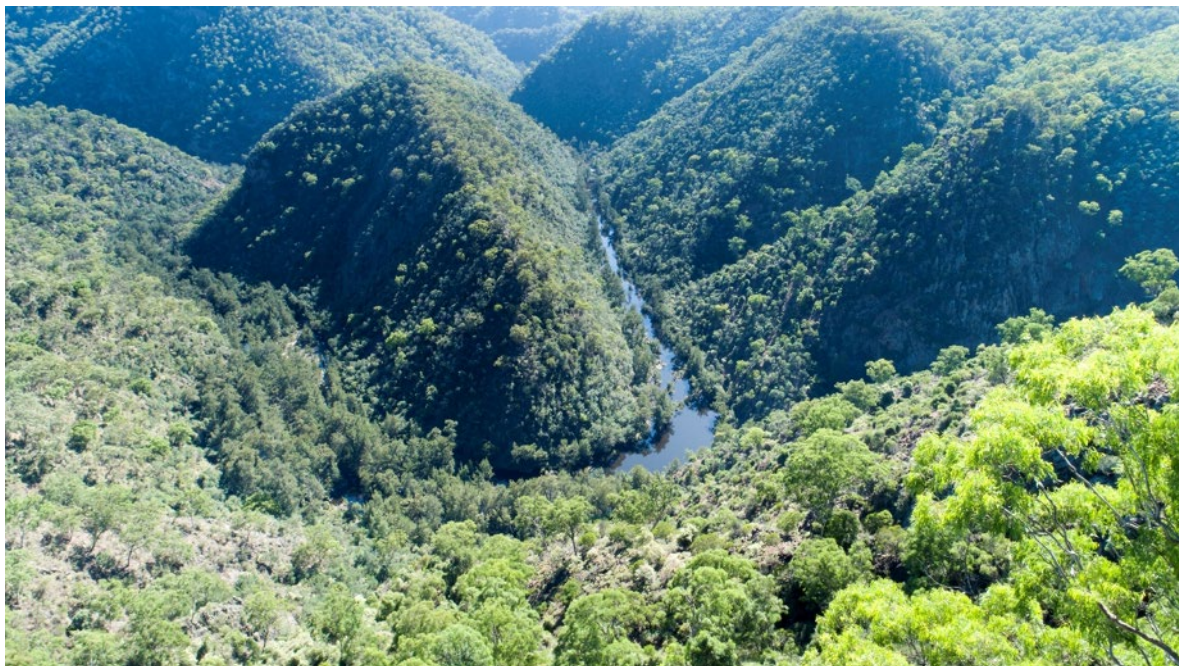
Monitor koalas across NSW to understand distribution, population status, health, habitat and threats and evaluate and adapt conservation actions.



Predictive modelling and decision support

Integrate monitoring, research and spatial environmental data into iterative models to forecast future conditions and prioritise actions.

Figure 4 Actions under management theme 3: Research, monitoring and data



Preserving intact ecosystems, such as this woodland in Guula Ngurra National Park, is important for conserving habitat and ensuring long-term connectivity for koalas, and will also benefit other forest and woodland-dwelling species such as greater gliders. Photo: Gareth Pickford/DCCEEW

Action toolbox

The action toolbox identifies a suite of management actions designed to address critical threats to koalas. Actions should be strategically applied at appropriate spatial scales (site, area and state) and locations, guided by the implementation plan. The toolbox is designed so that actions can be funded and delivered by the NSW Government together with other stakeholders including councils, private landholders, and government agencies.

Table 1 Management theme 1: Landscape-scale approaches and habitat management

Threat	Action description	Scale (site, area, state)
Habitat clearing and degradation from agricultural, forestry, mining, infrastructure and residential development, leading to habitat loss, fragmentation and reduced availability and connectivity, and loss of ecosystem function.	Land acquisitions and habitat protection Secure and enhance the legislative protections of important areas of habitat, strengthening landscape resilience and ecological connectivity. This will be achieved through engaging with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service's land acquisition program and other landscape management mechanisms, including Areas of Outstanding Biodiversity Value and Assets of Intergenerational Significance.	State
Habitat clearing and degradation from agricultural, forestry, mining, infrastructure and residential development, leading to habitat loss, fragmentation and reduced availability and connectivity, and loss of ecosystem function.	Private land conservation Work with landholders to protect, restore and connect koala habitat on private land through the Biodiversity Conservation Trust's in perpetuity conservation agreements and entry level initiatives. Investment will be guided by the priority management areas. Conservation arrangements may also be sought through other organisations.	State
Habitat clearing and degradation from agriculture, forestry, mining, infrastructure and residential development, leading to habitat loss, fragmentation and reduced availability and	Habitat restoration Target restoration, revegetation and maintenance efforts at site and landscape scales to enhance habitat quality, connectivity and resilience, particularly where links between key habitat areas are degraded.	Site, area

Threat	Action description	Scale (site, area, state)
connectivity, and loss of ecosystem function.	Develop and implement protocols to monitor the key habitat attributes and progress of habitat restoration works to inform habitat protection and restoration guidelines and actions.	
Physical and landscape barriers from roads, rail infrastructure, canals, fences and urban areas leading to restricted koala movement, reduced dispersal, limiting natural recolonisation and gene flow.	Dispersal barriers Engage with the relevant authority to improve landscape connectivity and faunal movements across built infrastructure via structures such as underpasses and overpasses. Monitor and evaluate the use of structures in assisting with koala movement and dispersal.	Site, area, state
Invasion and establishment of weeds that degrade koala habitat condition and function, restrict koala movement, are toxic or increase fire risk.	Invasive weeds Identify and prioritise the invasive weed species which pose the greatest current or future risk to koalas and their habitat. Implement targeted control programs to reduce the extent and impact of these weeds. Work with relevant research bodies to drive research and the development and application of more effective biological, chemical and mechanical weed control methods. Collaborate with local stakeholders such as councils, Local Land Services, non-government organisations and relevant partnerships to engage private landholders in weed management programs.	State
Inappropriate fire regimes including changes in fire frequency, intensity, seasonality and scale, with high-severity bushfires leading to koala mortality and habitat modification and loss of ecosystem function.	Emergency response Ensure effective emergency response and wildfire management to minimise impacts on koalas and their habitat by supporting community engagement and behaviour-change initiatives to reduce human-related ignitions. Engage with relevant government agencies, Local Aboriginal Land Councils and wildlife rehabilitator groups on a coordinated wildlife response. Improve training and implementation of the wildlife response roles.	Site, area

Threat	Action description	Scale (site, area, state)
Inappropriate fire regimes including changes in fire frequency, intensity, seasonality and scale, with high-severity bushfires leading to koala mortality and habitat modification and loss of ecosystem function.	<p>Bushfire management</p> <p>Engage with firefighting authorities, land managers, Aboriginal community and private landholders to support the implementation of evidence-based planned fire management, including cultural and ecological burning and hazard reduction, in accordance with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Koala Risk Management Protocol for Prescribed Burning.</p> <p>Engage with the NSW Rural Fire Service to support the adoption of the Koala Risk Management Protocol for Prescribed Burning across tenure. Engage with the NSW Rural Fire Service to include koalas as an environmental asset or focus area in bushfire risk management plans.</p> <p>Engage with the department's Fire and Cultural Science team for information on fire, threatened species and cultural science research and practice.</p>	Site, area
Rising temperatures and increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events associated with climate change.	<p>Climate resilience</p> <p>Identify, protect, connect and restore climate refugia to buffer the impacts of heat stress, drought and extreme weather events. Implement targeted management interventions to reduce impacts from flooding and other climate-driven disturbances.</p>	Site, area
Disenfranchisement of Traditional custodians and Aboriginal custodians negatively impacting cultural practice and conservation outcomes.	<p>Healthy Country</p> <p>Support healthy Country outcomes for koalas, nature and communities by recognising and resourcing Aboriginal cultural authority, by partnering with Aboriginal communities and organisations, removing barriers to knowledge transfer and accessing Country and giving effect to caring for Country practices.</p> <p>Support whole of Koala Country mapping of cultural pathways and sites building in intergenerational knowledge transfer activities.</p>	Site, area

Table 2 Management theme 2: Threat and population management

Threat description	Action	Scale
Habitat clearing and degradation from agricultural, forestry, mining, infrastructure, and residential development, leading to habitat loss, fragmentation, and reduced availability and connectivity and loss of ecosystem function.	Habitat mapping Undertake fine-scale koala habitat mapping and on-ground ecological surveys to identify koala habitat. This mapping will then be used to inform the strategic conservation of koala habitat through local council koala plans of management and other planning instruments.	Site, area
Limited awareness and understanding within the community of threats to koalas and of effective actions to mitigate those threats, leading to decisions and behaviours that exacerbate habitat loss, fragmentation and other pressures, ultimately reducing habitat quality, connectivity and the viability of koala populations.	Education and engagement Engage with communities, local councils, landholders, and students to educate, raise awareness and promote conservation actions for koalas and their habitat. Develop educational materials, support technology such as the I Spy Koala app and deliver workshops, field days, and other community engagement events to support habitat restoration and conservation.	Site, area
Collisions with vehicles on roads causing injury and mortality.	Vehicle strike mitigation Implement fencing, signage, speed restrictions, lighting, roadside vegetation management, targeted community engagement, crossing structures and traffic calming in high-risk areas. Adopt emerging technologies that reduce the level of koala injury and mortality from vehicle strike.	Site, area
Injury or death caused by domestic dogs, horses and cattle.	Reducing dog attacks Facilitate behaviour change around domestic animal and koala interactions. Educate communities, landholders and pet owners about practical measures to reduce koala risk, including improved pet and stock separation such as fencing upgrades and vegetation management in areas adjacent to high-quality koala habitat to reduce encounters.	Site, area, state

Threat description	Action	Scale
Infection with <i>Chlamydia</i> and koala retrovirus reducing survival, reproduction and immune function.	Disease monitoring Monitor and detect chlamydial infections and assess disease prevalence and susceptibility in koala populations through testing of koalas taken into care, fresh scat collection and analysis or direct sampling.	Site, area
Infection with <i>Chlamydia</i> and koala retrovirus reducing survival, reproduction and immune function.	Disease management Use a risk-based approach to prioritise the management of disease in koala populations such as south-west Sydney and select the appropriate management response. This may include development of a local chlamydia or disease management strategy. Engage regional partners, the rehabilitation sector, koala experts and relevant community stakeholders to support the development and implementation.	Site, area
Low genetic diversity and population demographics increase the species vulnerability to stochastic events, susceptibility to diseases, reproduction failure and local extinction.	Conservation translocations Where appropriate, the NSW Government will reinforce populations to improve gene flow and population demographic representation and dynamics. Additionally, the NSW Government will re-establish koala populations through targeted reintroductions in areas where local extinction has occurred, where appropriate.	Site
Catastrophic decline of populations and local extinction due to habitat loss, low genetic diversity, genetic introgression and disease.	Population genetics and management interventions Management interventions such as collection and storage of samples for future genetic analyses and interventions (e.g. tissue, sperm), captive management including breeding and the protection of ecological refuges will be implemented by the NSW Government, or other organisations upon agreement with the NSW Government, where risk of local extinction is considered unacceptable.	Site
Reduced capacity for rescue and rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned koalas and coordination and alignment of rehabilitation activities with conservation actions	Supporting wildlife rehabilitation Support the wildlife rehabilitation sector to improve their capacity to care for rescued, sick and injured koalas	Site, area, state

Threat description	Action	Scale
Limited evidence-base guiding koala rescue, rehabilitation and release practices.	Post-release monitoring Advance targeted scientific research to better understand koala rescue and rehabilitation practices and their impact on survivability upon release and apply findings to refine and standardise care protocols that improve survival and recovery outcomes for rescued koalas.	Site

Table 3 **Management theme 3: Research, monitoring and data**

Threat description	Action	Scale
Habitat clearing and degradation from agricultural, forestry, mining, infrastructure and residential development, leading to habitat loss, fragmentation and reduced availability and connectivity, and loss of ecosystem function.	Data and spatial tools Develop, maintain and share high-quality statewide koala data and habitat spatial products, to strengthen data integrity, improve accessibility support strategic evidence-based decision-making and guide adaptive monitoring and management.	State
Absence of long-term monitoring to inform key knowledge gaps in koala ecology, population trends and threat impacts and constrains the ability to refine management and optimise conservation outcomes over time.	Population monitoring Strategically monitor koala populations and landscapes across NSW over time, ensuring up-to-date scientific data continues to inform our understanding of koala distribution, population status, habitat and threats, and to evaluate and adapt conservation actions. Continue standardised statewide monitoring to add to the existing high-quality knowledge base, using multi-species monitoring technology such as thermal drones, passive acoustic recorders, and detailed health and genetic surveillance. Partner with Aboriginal communities to develop biocultural indicators associating habitat condition with specific culturally significant metrics such as trees, food or medicine species associated with koala.	Area, state
Knowledge gaps and uncertainty in aspects of koala ecology, traditional custodian land management practices, population dynamics, climate-related impacts, threat impacts and management practices limiting effective management and prioritisation.	Research Build knowledge and translate results to gain insights that help inform policy and on-ground koala conservation actions. Work with land managers, research organisations, Aboriginal organisations and communities to undertake targeted scientific research.	Site, area, state

Threat description	Action	Scale
Absence of iterative historic trends and forecasting to generate koala decision products.	<p>Predictive modelling and decision support</p> <p>Integrate monitoring, research and spatial environmental data into iterative statewide historic trends and forecasting models.</p> <p>Produce decision-support products that identify important koala populations and habitats, assess how their condition and threat exposure have changed through time, and forecast future vulnerability under alternative climate, land-use and management scenarios.</p> <p>Use these products to support transparent spatial prioritisation, target management investment and evaluate the likely benefits of alternative conservation actions.</p>	Site, area, state

Monitoring actions

The NSW koala monitoring program will continue to be delivered to help us better understand changes in koala populations and inform koala conservation efforts. Monitoring will be designed to capture information about other threatened species, where monitoring approaches and technology allow.

The effectiveness of actions delivered under this koala conservation strategy will also be measured by ongoing monitoring, research and evaluation. An outcomes approach will measure the response of species, habitats or ecosystems to management actions to determine if the actions are meaningful and cost-effective.

Monitoring and evaluation of actions will allow us to deliver an adaptive management approach. Priorities and actions will be adjusted as needed in response to monitoring data and new information as it becomes available.

Example only – not for inclusion in the final koala conservation strategy

Site 1: Southern Highlands

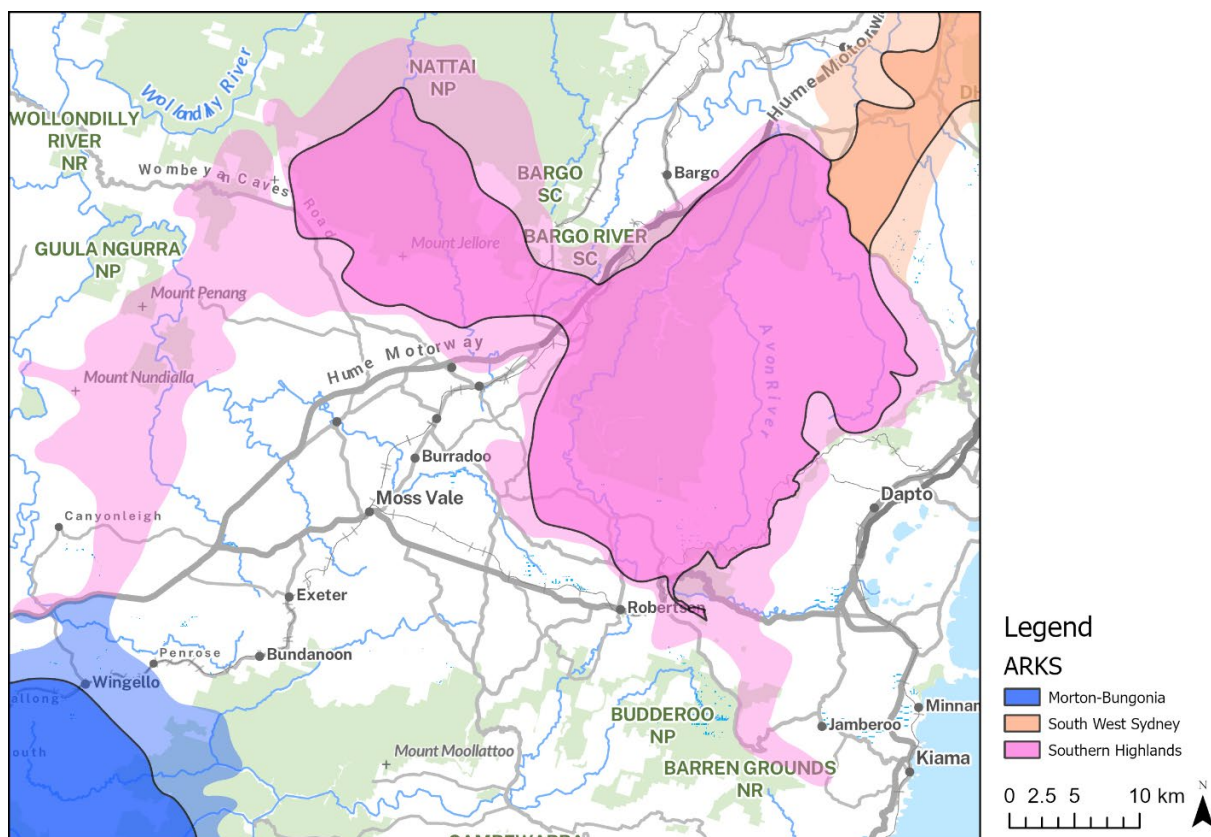
The Southern Highlands Priority Management Area (**Figure 10**) includes land across Gundungurra and Dharawal Country. The area connects to 2 adjacent ARKS Morton-Bungonia and South-west Sydney. The area includes 136,000 ha of koala habitat with a mean density of 0.025 koalas per hectare. It makes up 1.75% of the NSW koala population.

Total site area (ha): 153,000

Local government area: Kiama, Shellharbour, Upper Lachlan Shire, Wingecarribee, Wollondilly, Wollongong

National Parks and Wildlife Service reserve: Bangadilly National Park, Bargo River State Conservation Area, Bargo State Conservation Area, Barren Grounds Nature Reserve, Budderoo National Park, Guula Ngurra National Park, Illawarra Escarpment State Conservation Area, Joadja Nature Reserve, Macquarie Pass National Park, Macquarie Pass State Conservation Area, Nattai National Park, Upper Nepean State Conservation Area

Management site map



Area map of the Southern Highlands ARKS. Dark pink shows the Southern Highlands ARKS and light pink shows the adjacent connecting habitat. Neighbouring ARKS are shown for spatial context in blue and orange.

An implementation plan will identify ARKS which have been prioritised for management, identify the relevant critical threats and set out the specific actions needed to address them.

Example only – not for inclusion in the final koala conservation strategy

The below tables display a full list of critical threats and management activities that could be included in an implementation plan to protect koalas at the Southern Highlands site. The tables are provided as an example only.

Possible site-specific actions

Table 1 Management theme 1: Landscape-scale approaches and habitat management

Threat	Southern Highlands POSSIBLE action
Habitat clearing and degradation from agricultural, forestry, mining, infrastructure and residential development, leading to habitat loss, fragmentation and reduced availability and connectivity, and loss of ecosystem function.	Land acquisitions and habitat protection Secure and enhance legislative protections for key habitat areas. Strengthen landscape resilience and connectivity through the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service land acquisition program and other mechanisms.
Habitat clearing and degradation from agricultural, forestry, mining, infrastructure and residential development, leading to habitat loss, fragmentation and reduced availability and connectivity, and loss of ecosystem function.	Private land conservation Work with landholders to protect, restore and connect koala habitat on private land through BCT's private land conservation initiatives. Prioritise key areas such as the Great Western Wildlife Corridor and critical pinch points in linkages at High Range and Paddy's River. Secure outcomes in perpetuity where possible.
Habitat clearing and degradation from agriculture, forestry, mining, infrastructure and residential development, leading to habitat loss, fragmentation and reduced availability and connectivity, and loss of ecosystem function.	Habitat restoration Target restoration and revegetation to enhance habitat quality, connectivity and resilience. Prioritise linkages at High Range and Paddy's River and key areas of high-quality habitat including East Kangaloon.

Threat	Southern Highlands POSSIBLE action
Physical and landscape barriers from roads, rail infrastructure, canals, fences and urban areas leading to restricted koala movement, reduced dispersal, limiting natural recolonisation and gene flow.	Dispersal barriers Enhance connectivity and landscape function by using structures such as underpasses and overpasses to improve connectivity across the Hume Highway.
Invasion and establishment of weeds that degrade koala habitat condition and function, restrict koala movement, are toxic or increase fire risk.	Invasive weeds Identify and prioritise invasive weeds impacting koala habitat in the Southern Highlands such as blackberry. Implement targeted control across key areas including East Kangaloon and the Great Western Wildlife Corridor and critical linkages at High Range and Paddy's River.
Inappropriate fire regimes including changes in fire frequency, intensity, seasonality and scale, with high-severity bushfires leading to koala mortality and habitat modification and loss of ecosystem function.	Emergency response Ensure effective wildfire management to minimise impacts on koalas and their habitat, focusing on reducing or mitigating ignitions in the Southern Blue Mountains and preventing fire crossing the Hume Highway into critical populations on the Woronora Plateau. Follow fire response plan outlined in the Koala Blue Mountains Conservation Action Plan.
Inappropriate fire regimes including changes in fire frequency, intensity, seasonality and scale, with high-severity bushfires leading to koala mortality and habitat modification and loss of ecosystem function.	Bushfire management Engage with firefighting authorities, land managers and landholders to support evidence-based planned fire management in koala habitat, focusing on areas of high koala density such as the Upper Nepean AIS site. Embed appropriate koala requirements in bushfire planning and environmental assessment processes. Follow NPWS guidelines for burning in koala habitat if planning a burn in the Southern Highlands koala focus area identified by the Bushfire Management Committee.

Threat	Southern Highlands POSSIBLE action
<p>Rising temperatures and increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events associated with climate change including increased rainfall resulting in flooding, or reduced rainfall or prolonged droughts resulting in heat stress, disease susceptibility and mortality and reduced food and water quality and availability and loss of ecosystem resilience and risk of ecosystem collapse.</p>	<p>Climate resilience</p> <p>Identify, protect, connect and restore climate refugia to buffer climate impacts, prioritising riverine corridors along the Nattai and Wingecarribee rivers and Emu/Black Bobs creek and higher elevation, high rainfall refuges on basalt soils at East Kangaloon.</p> <p>Focus on targeted management to reduce climate-driven disturbance.</p>
<p>Disenfranchisement of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal custodians negatively impacting cultural practice and conservation outcomes.</p>	<p>Healthy Country</p> <p>Build a pathway to healthy Country through partnerships with Gundungurra and Dharawal communities.</p> <p>Support cultural land management and continued investment in joint initiatives such as the eDNA Koala Predation Project.</p>

Table 2 Management theme 2: Threat and population management

Threat description	Southern Highlands POSSIBLE action
Habitat clearing and degradation from agricultural, forestry, mining, infrastructure and residential development leading to habitat loss, fragmentation and reduced availability and connectivity, and loss of ecosystem function.	Habitat mapping Support Wingecarribee Shire Council to develop a koala plan of management for their LGA.
Limited awareness and understanding within the community of threats to koalas and of effective actions to mitigate those threats, leading to decisions and behaviours that exacerbate habitat loss, fragmentation and other pressures, ultimately reducing habitat quality, connectivity, and the viability of koala populations.	Education and engagement Engage with communities, landholders and schools to promote koala conservation. Work with groups such as Southern Highlands Landcare, WinZero and local schools in key habitat areas including Colo Vale and East Kangaloon through targeted education, workshops and on-ground engagement.
Infection with <i>Chlamydia</i> and koala retrovirus reducing survival, reproduction and immune function.	Disease monitoring Undertake opportunistic monitoring of koala disease using non-invasive methods such as scat sampling and carer data, targeted to emerging risks to inform management response.

Table 3 Management theme 3: Research, monitoring and data

Threat description	Southern Highlands DRAFT action
Absence of long-term monitoring to inform key knowledge gaps in koala ecology, population trends and threat impacts constrains the ability to refine management and optimise conservation outcomes over time.	<p>Population monitoring</p> <p>Continue bi-annual Song Meter surveys monitoring koala populations across the Southern Highlands to continue to build a dataset of occupancy and population trends.</p>
Knowledge gaps and uncertainty in aspects of koala ecology, Traditional Owner land management practices, population dynamics, threat impacts and management practices limiting effective management and prioritisation	<p>Research</p> <p>Targeted research project on extensive canopy dieback in the Southern Highlands in collaboration with Wingecarribee Shire Council and the Botanic Gardens to assess extent of issue and management solutions.</p>