Australian Wildlife Society

Gives a grant to Port Stephens Koala hospital to purchase rescue/triage enclosures

Megan Fabian

Concern for the survival of koalas in the wild has increased in recent years, with the major threat being the destruction of habitat through development. Koalas are also under pressure from vehicle strikes, dog attacks and diseases such as chlamydia.

Port Stephens Koalas (PSK), founded in 1987, is working tirelessly to rescue and treat koalas who fall victim to these threats and helping an average of 50 koalas per year.

PSK is experiencing an increase in the number of koalas that are affected by blindness, potentially a cause of stress-induced chlamydia. They are concerned that if koala populations in the Port Stephens region fall to two-thirds of their current numbers, they'll survive in isolated clumps for five to ten years, but then they will become locally extinct.

PSK is battling to protect one of the last colonies of koalas on the eastern seaboard of Australia and completing rescues from Muswellbrook to southern Lake Macquarie and everywhere in between. PSK rehabilitate koalas, aiming to give them the best opportunity to be returned to the wild and to ensure that future generations may continue to enjoy seeing koalas in their natural habitat.

PSK opened a rehabilitation facility two years ago, which has a capacity for 14 koalas. However, a new $3 million koala hospital is being built at Anna Bay, adjacent to the already established rehabilitation facility, with work expected to commence this month. The new koala hospital will have an operating theatre and four intensive care rooms, and a sanctuary open to the public to display up to 30 koalas. The sanctuary will open in approximately three months and the hospital by March 2020, in a final effort to preserve Port Stephens koalas to prevent them from becoming locally extinct in the region.

Above: An orphan joey called Morton was hand raised by one of our carers, Julie Jennings. Morton underwent a period of dehumanization at our rehabilitation facility prior to release.

Patrick Medway presenting the cheque to Ron Land.

Port Stephens Koalas secretary Ron Land (right) with Steve Gransden, from Nelson Bay Steel Fabrication, and the aluminium cage.

PSK currently has ten koalas in long term rehab with another three in intensive home care so the hospital cannot come soon enough. These cots will be invaluable to PSK in the treatment and transfer of ill and injured koalas, both at the present facility and the koala hospital.

Australian Wildlife Society has donated $5,000 to PSK for the purchase of two rescue/triage enclosures designed to carry and transport sick and injured koalas. Upon receipt of the grant, PSK expressed its deepest gratitude to the Society for its generosity in providing PSK with the funds to purchase the triage/transfer cots. PSK members said it is acts of kindness like this that gives them the will to keep going.

Ron Land, PSK secretary, said that the aluminium structures are lightweight and adjustable, ensuring ease of access and transportation for carers and hospital staff. The rescue/triage enclosures can be fitted easily into the back of a vehicle for transportation and are strong enough to carry animals weighing up to 10 kg. Because of their flexibility, the rescue/triage enclosures can also be adjusted for convenient use by the hospital staff when treating koalas. The rescue/triage enclosures were designed by PSK carer Simone Aurino and manufactured by Nelson Bay Steel Fabrication.

For more information on Port Stephens Koalas, please visit portstephenskoalas.com.au/ or follow them on Facebook.

Marion Land, senior carer at Port Stephens Koala Hospital, gives Tolley a supplementary feed.

The two completed triage/transfer cots are already in use at one of the rehabilitation/treatment centres and also at the home of one of the carers.

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