



A Focus on South Australia's Koalas and the Rehabilitation of **Ellie and Jellybean** Cathy Jackson

Adelaide and Hills Koala Rescue –1300KOALAZ Inc. is a group of similar-minded koala rescuers and carers with valid specialist koala permits in Adelaide, South Australia. We are a registered not-for-profit organisation with approved charity status. Our mission is to protect koalas (*Phascogale cinereus*) in the wild by enhancing and protecting their natural habitat and following the principles of rescue, rehabilitation, and release.

We assist in improving existing koala habitat, educating the public about the threats to wild koalas and their environment, and encouraging actions that can be implemented to address these threats. The work of 1300KOALAZ is promoted by word of mouth and social media to raise awareness and inform the public about the vital research implemented to protect wild koala populations. We also create partnerships with other organisations involved in koala conservation, habitat regeneration, and environmental protection to ensure the preservation of this species.

Our focus is to rescue, rehabilitate, and release wild koalas in Adelaide, South Australia, and we receive a number of calls for help. Unfortunately, South Australia's koalas often succumb to dog attacks, vehicle strikes, and disease. Koalas that enter our care usually range from having broken bones from being hit by a car or attacked by a dog, being affected by chlamydia and requiring treatment or gut dysbiosis, or being an orphaned koala joey that has been displaced from its mother's pouch. When a koala joey is found without its mother, we will send out a search party to find the mother as we believe that a koala joey is always healthier and better with its mother, provided it has not been involved in an accident.

We had an extraordinary rescue in 2022 that involved a mother koala, Ellie, and her joey, Jellybean. One day, a local Adelaide resident was approached by Jellybean, wanting to be held and fed, which was unusual as a mother and its joey are generally close together. We rescued Jellybean, who was only 800 grams

and very dehydrated. We searched for Jellybean's mother, Ellie, and fortunately, she was found, and both koalas were reunited under our care. Ellie's mammary glands had collapsed and could not produce enough milk to feed Jellybean. Both Ellie and Jellybean were very thin and in urgent need of care. The veterinarian advised us that Ellie would need to be euthanised if her weight remained exceedingly low. Ellie was also rejecting Jellybean, so there was only one thing left to do – increase Ellie's body weight and hand-rear Jellybean.

Over the coming weeks, Ellie's weight increased significantly, and the veterinarian gave her the all-clear. Ellie came into care with a body count score of 1 and left our Carer's care with a score of 4.5. Jellybean also thrived and gained 2.5 kilograms in two weeks. Ellie was released back into her territory. However, it was not viable to introduce Jellybean back to Ellie as she

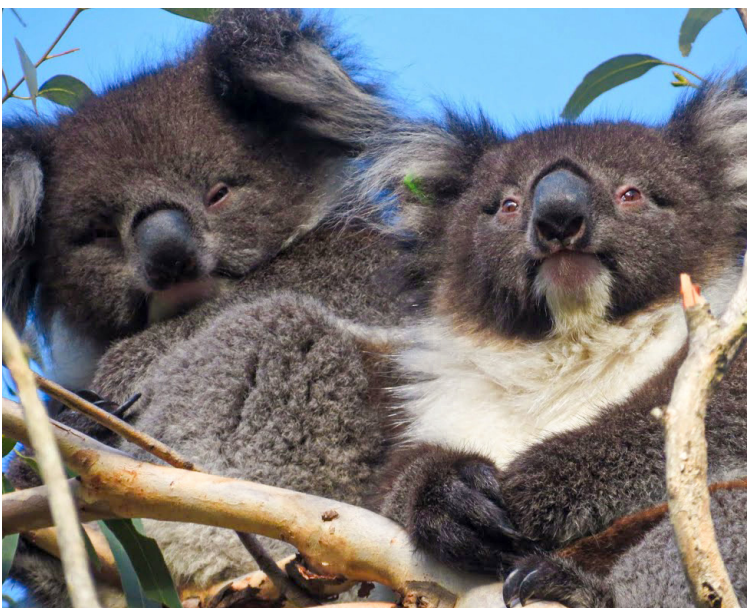
Top: Ellie the koala (*Phascogale cinereus*).
Image: Alona Tester.



Mother koala, Ellie, with her joey, Jellybean, in the fork of a eucalyptus tree. Image: Alona Tester.



Jellybean the koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*). Image: Alona Tester.



Jellybean and Betsy – the best of friends. Image: Alona Tester.

no longer produced the milk that Jellybean required. Jellybean remained in care, where she made friends with another koala, Betsy. The two became friends and were released on the same property where Jellybean had been rescued. Jellybean remained in care for nine months and was released back into the wild at 5.3 kilograms.



Funds generously contributed by the Australian Wildlife Society have assisted 1300KOALAZ in purchasing Makita fans and battery packs to keep koalas cool whilst in rehabilitation care. During the scorching summer months, these fans come in very handy. A koala in care can become incredibly stressed if they are overheated, significantly reducing their chances of a successful recovery. Keeping a koala nice and cool helps to reduce its stress levels and makes them more comfortable to receive treatment.

Over the past fifteen years, koala habitat in the Adelaide Hills has been significantly reduced due to several bushfires. In 2015, the Samson Flat bushfires affected the northern part of Adelaide Hills, which burned 49,000 hectares of prime koala habitat. In 2019, a further 25,000 hectares of prime koala habitat was lost in the north-east of the Adelaide Hills with the Cudlee Creek bushfires. In 2021, 2,700 hectares of koala habitat were lost in the Cherry Gardens Bushfires. Subsequently, only one area of Adelaide Hills has not been devastated by bushfires which is a refuge for koalas. In addition, the 2019-2020 bushfires on Kangaroo Island resulted in the loss of 211,272 hectares of prime koala habitat, and this koala population was chlamydia-free. Unfortunately, Adelaide did not receive federal funding to target habitat loss.

Adelaide has only one unscathed population of koalas remaining, which runs along the South Eastern Freeway – a busy highway that claims the lives of twenty koalas each month on average. Koalas are particularly vulnerable during the breeding season from September to February, as this is when they move across the landscape in search of a mate, cross busy roads and get hit by a car. South Australia is the only state in Australia not to have any wildlife bridges or fencing, and there is still no government funding available to address the issue.

To find out more and make a donation to help 1300KOALAZ rescue, rehabilitate and release South Australia's koalas and conserve their habitat, please visit 1300koalaz.com

Top Right: Makita fans, a compact portable cooling solution, are used to keep koalas (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) cool during warmer months. Image: 18V Mobile 180mm Makita Fan, viewed 20 June 2023, <https://www.makita.com.au/building-construction/category/lighting-fans/dcf102z-18v-mobile-180mm-7-jobsite-fan>