



SKER

Southern
Koala &
Echidna
Rescue | Steve Farrimond

Southern Koala and Echidna Rescue is a not-for-profit charity governed by a Board, with forty dedicated volunteers managed by our Operations Manager. Founded by Mish and Wade Simpson in 2018 and later registered in 2020 with a vision to be recognised as one of South Australia's leading wildlife welfare facilities, contributing to a sustainable future for koalas (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) and echidnas (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*).

We have a multifaceted remit covering rescue, rehabilitation, research, and revegetation. Our mission is to ensure South Australia's native wildlife continue to enjoy a quality life in the wild by providing advice, advocacy, rescue, and rehabilitation services, specialising in the rehabilitation of koalas and echidnas. We also support multiple research programs nationwide, providing valuable data and samples from wild populations.

We provide rescue services across Adelaide's southern suburbs, the Adelaide Hills, and Fleurieu Peninsula, and more broadly across South Australia for echidna rescue and advice. We are proud of the collaboration we have established with like-minded organisations across South Australia and nationwide, the service we provide to our community,

and most importantly, the care we provide for injured, sick, displaced, or orphaned wildlife.

Specialist Rehabilitation Centre

Located on a 22-acre property in the Southern Adelaide region, Southern Koala and Echidna Rescue has successfully engineered a specialist rehabilitation centre that can provide exceptional veterinary care to Australian native animals and become a national knowledge hub for koalas and echidnas.

Incorporating an operational veterinary hospital providing triage, x-rays, ultrasounds, administering anaesthesia and delivering on-site medical treatments, phase one of the centre offers the capacity to provide care and rehabilitation for up to twelve adult koalas in our purpose-built

outdoor enclosures, internal hospital enclosure, and pre-release yards, plus two separate koala "kindy" pens equipped to house multiple koala joeys, along with multiple enclosures for echidna rehabilitation. Phase one also incorporated bushfire preparedness implementations, including a second access driveway, a registered farm fire unit and the installation of the Embarr Argus radiant heat and ember detection system.

We greatly appreciate the financial support received from many of our followers and members, plus grant funding from the Australian Wildlife Society, WIRES, NAB Foundation, Federal government (Preparing Australian Communities - Local Stream), and outstanding in-kind support from WG Builders and many other local trades and suppliers to complete phase one. Phase two of construction commenced in February 2024, with five additional external koala enclosures being established.

Top: Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) rescue. Image: Michael Eastwell.



Koala Kindy enclosure. Image: Steve Farrimond.

Rescues and Operating Model

Since the start of 2019, over 2,800 phone calls have been made to Southern Koala and Echidna Rescue, resulting in over 1,500 rescues, with more than 670 animals receiving medical intervention and over 390 animals being released to the wild. As community awareness grows through education and all forms of media, calls to our 24/7 rescue hotline are increasing yearly. We received 575 rescue calls from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023, with 606 calls received between 1 July 2023 and 29 February 2024.

We have been fortunate enough to gain philanthropic support for 2023, enabling casual employment of two vets for a minimum of 16 hours a week, plus part-time employment of our Operations Manager two days per week. These successful appointments have enabled us to expand our research collaboration, assess and treat more wildlife on-site, effectively manage our growing volunteer group, and expand advocacy engagement across multiple stakeholders.

Our board has prioritised two key strategies for 2024-2025, both deemed vital for the ongoing success and growth of the organisation. Strategic Priority One – secure funding for a full-time Operations Manager. A full-time resource manager for our volunteer team will help deliver our mission and key priorities,



Rehabilitation Centre. Image: Steve Farrimond.

including rescue, on-site wildlife veterinary care, research/biodiversity initiatives, advocacy, and education programs. Strategic Priority Two – secure funding to increase part-time veterinary hours to 30 hours per week. These additional hours will ensure veterinary capacity is available on-site 6 days per week.

There is a veterinary crisis impacting Australia. The number of veterinary professionals is reducing due to stress and burnout, affecting the availability of veterinarians to service the general community and wildlife rescue organisations. A reduction in veterinarians presents multiple challenges, including attracting voluntary hours from vets, obtaining access to external vets offsite, and, most significantly, the shortage in vets drives up the cost of vet employment, and poses a risk to Southern Koala and Echidna Rescue as a charity which employs veterinarians through funding.

If you know a vet based in South Australia who might have an interest in learning more about Southern Koala and Echidna Rescue, please refer them to Mish Simpson at mish@sker.org.au

Research

Southern Koala and Echidna Rescue is a science and solution-driven organisation, and we strive to use the best available science in all aspects of decision-making, including empowering our team to harness a solution-focused mindset.



Echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*) release. Image: Steve Farrimond.

In February 2022, we lost a great friend and colleague, Dr Joanna Griffith. Consequently, we developed the Jo Griffith research initiative to honour her life's work and passion for wildlife research. We are committed to supporting research programs across Australia that can benefit from receiving data and samples from wild koala and echidna populations.

We currently support programs in Universities across South Australia, New South Wales, and Queensland researching: 1. Koala milk protein and pouch microbiome, 2. Marsupial lactation, 3. Koala health and disease, 4. Koala genetics, 5. Cortisol stress response and its minimisation in rescued wildlife, and 6. Echidna genome and molecular and biomedical science.



Rehabilitation Centre interior. Image: Deb Farrimond.



Echidna rehabilitation enclosures. Image: Steve Farrimond.



Rehabilitation Centre hospital enclosures. Image: Steve Farrimond.

Revegetation and Biodiversity

Southern Koala and Echidna Rescue have developed a biodiversity plan in partnership with Biodiversity McLaren Vale to revegetate and maintain our 22-acre property, eradicating feral species and planting out native species. We have established a koala food source plantation with a vision to harvest browse on-site within the next six or seven years, feeding koalas in care without needing volunteers to travel across our region to source food.

In line with our scientific approach, we are undertaking experimental approaches to long stem planting, adopting practices developed in New South Wales to assess if the same practices will be successful in the heavier soils across the Adelaide Hills, South Australia. We hope to share positive outcomes with other conservation groups in South Australia once the research is complete.

We have recruited experienced revegetation volunteers to manage our property and extend our biodiversity activities to other landholdings within our region with the support of the landowners, working to build wildlife corridors and reduce the impact of urban and road development.

Advocacy and Community Education

Southern Koala and Echidna Rescue actively engages and corresponds with local, state, and federal government ministers and departments, providing advice or opinion on urban developments and advocating for changes that will deliver better outcomes to protect



Pre-release enclosures. Image: Deb Farrimond.



Koala pole rescue. Image: Michael Eastwell.



Koala pole rescue (continued). Image: Michael Eastwell.

native wildlife, such as reduced speed limits in high impact zones, improved lighting and signage, and effective barriers.

During 2023, we worked with the Department of Infrastructure and Transport to obtain improved signage on the Southern Expressway in Adelaide, South Australia, to enhance driver awareness of wildlife on this road and increase the number of reports for injured wildlife. We will continue further engagement, proposing improved lighting and more effective barriers in line with barrier designs implemented in Queensland and collaborating with like-minded groups to represent requirements that deliver better outcomes for native wildlife.

Apart from engagement with the government, we undertake activities to broaden community awareness. We regularly present to school groups, Scouts and Girl Guides, and other community services such as St John Ambulance SA, plus we attend numerous community events.

Want to Know More or Get in Touch?

Southern Koala and Echidna Rescue is poised to deliver great outcomes for Australia's native wildlife. If you would like to know more or support us with phase two construction and our strategic priorities, get in touch with Mish Simpson at 0403 435 482 or mish@sker.org.au

Funds provided by the Australian Wildlife Society assisted Southern Koala and Echidna Rescue in developing temporary enclosures within the rehabilitation centre that can be used to provide shelter for echidnas, koalas, and other native species in the event of a bushfire or any other event causing capacity overflow.



Rehabilitation Centre rehabilitation enclosures (right view). Image: Deb Farrimond.



Rehabilitation Centre rehabilitation enclosures (left view). Image: Deb Farrimond.



Eucalypt plantings. Image: Steve Farrimond.



Eucalypt plantings (ground-level view). Image: Steve Farrimond.