



KOALA WELFARE POLICY

The National Koala Alliance (NKA) is a non-profit, non-government network, which represents community environment professionals and groups throughout Australia, and around the world through its network-structure. The NKA is the peak advocacy alliance that works to protect the welfare of koalas and is committed to the conservation of wild koala populations throughout their habitat range. The NKA strives to achieve this through advocacy, education, research and community empowerment. The NKA's vision/mission statement is:

“To provide a strong, united and cohesive voice for koala conservation and protection”.

1 FUNCTIONS TO PROTECT KOALA WELFARE

NKA's functions may include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Action on matters of agreed policy related to koala welfare, and to advocate for the adoption of, or action on, policy by the appropriate authorities/industry;
- (b) To liaise with organisations dealing with koala welfare matters, including national and international bodies; and
- (c) To do any such thing as is determined from time to time by the Steering Committee to be in the best interests of koala welfare protection, without thereby committing member organisations to support such activities.

2 POLICY POSITION

The following list indicates the NKA's policy position on matters relating to koala welfare:

- (a) Koalas are protected from all preventable causes of death, injury and disease (e.g. vegetation removal, transport infrastructure, dog attack, treatment of disease, etc.).
- (b) Each koala population affected, or likely to be affected by an infrastructure, agricultural, mining or development project must be managed appropriately through a Fauna Management Plan which adheres to current best practice and maintains the animal's welfare at all times. The key priority of each project must be the avoidance of habitat removal and other significant impacts on koala welfare. All management plans for koalas must be prepared by an experienced consultant and approved by the relevant State authority, prior to approval of works.
- (c) Every sick or injured koala is to receive an adequate standard of care that complies with current best practice, as soon as possible.
- (d) Euthanasia is a tool to ensure koala welfare where an individual is in a critical state, and has a poor prognosis to alleviate suffering. Euthanasia should only be applied with the most extreme caution, particularly where local wild koala population numbers are in decline and where resources exist to conduct successful surgery and rehabilitation of the animal, that would result in its survival in the wild*.
- (e) Wildlife-friendly hazard reduction burning protocols must be developed to minimise the ecological impacts of controlled/hazard reduction bush burning on koalas, other wildlife and ecosystems. A 'wildlife-friendly practices' education programme must be developed and conducted for operational staff. Protocols should include engagement with local wildlife rescue groups through education and operations, including their phone contact details in case of emergency. Practice must be conducted under the supervision of a suitably qualified wildlife rescuer or spotter/catcher to ensure that animal welfare is maintained.
- (f) Wildlife rescuers, rehabilitators, environmental consultants, fauna spotter/catchers and other related personnel engaged to manage wildlife on development sites must be appropriately skilled and qualified and conduct operations to avoid adverse welfare outcomes for the individual animal.
- (g) The provision of veterinary care to sick and injured koalas must meet current acceptable standards of animal welfare and be consistent with good veterinary practice.

** Note: the release of infertile koalas back into the wild is the subject of controversy and current debate. The benefits or otherwise of the practice have not been determined. Given the controversy associated with the practice, a precautionary position should be based on avoiding ecological harm, and avoiding adverse animal welfare outcomes. Surgical ovario-hysterectomy effectively obviates any likelihood of breeding, hence avoiding chance of disease transmission, and seems to address individual welfare issues associated with things like disease progression and excessive sexual harassment, which might occur in entire, but infertile females.*