



# GUM TIPS

*The Koala Hospital Newsletter*



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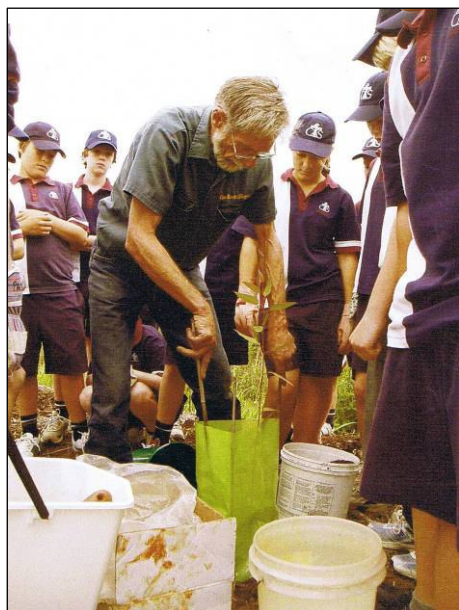
**Merry Xmas from us...  
and all the helpers at  
Koala Hospital**

## School Children's Vision for the Future



St Columbia School on the outskirts of Port Macquarie have put in place koalas in their area by planting a large number of koala food trees in their school grounds.

One of the students, Eva Nolan won a competition in 2005, winning \$200 for her efforts. Eva chose to spend her money on purchasing koala food trees with the vision that future generations will be able to see koalas feeding and sheltering in these trees.



Chris Rowland, John Morrison, Hayley Mills and Peter Schulties, volunteers from the Koala Hospital helped Tracey Chapman, a Year 6 teacher organise and prepare the site for the big planting day.

Chris Rowland, our well known Habitat Coordinator gave the students a short education session on tree species and planting procedures

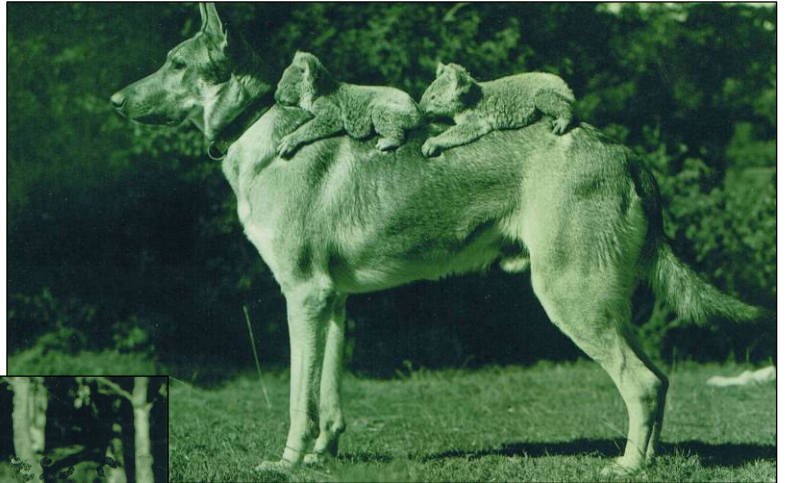
that would consequently give the young trees the best chance of survival to maturity. Then away the enthusiastic students went and over an afternoon they planted 190 trees.



It is a fantastic thing to see children and other members of the public with such a conservation attitude. The Koala Hospital always has a large number of local provenance tree seedlings for sale, so if you wish to make your place "koala friendly" come up and buy a tree!!



## Koala Carer Extraordinaire!!!



Even though all wildlife carers, and particularly koala carers do not condone dogs (nor cats for that matter) being in close proximity to our native animals for very obvious reasons (they can and do attack and kill them) sometimes some very interesting "nature" stories arise.

A elderly visitor to the hospital some months ago gave us copies of photos of an amazing male German Shepherd dog called "Braveheart" who lived at the Lone Pine Sanctuary on the Gold Coast of QLD back in the early 1900's.. The elderly visitor is actually the little girl pictured beside the dog and the kangaroo.

Braveheart (the dog) apparently "mothered" the orphaned koala joeys and happily wandered round the sanctuary with his bundles on his back. As you can see from the photo he seems quite upright and proud to be in charge of such special cargo.

Now doesn't that warm the cockles of your heart!!!!

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### **University of Sydney**

Research in the University of Sydney Koala Infectious Disease Research Group has been progressing very well. Through our collaboration with the Koala Preservation Society we are progressing well in our research goals in understanding infectious disease in koalas.

Many KPS hospital volunteers attended seminars given by Jo in the past few weeks. It was great to have so many people interested in hearing about the research. Some were so keen they attended seminars more than once! There were some very interesting questions and these seminars have been an important tool in communicating where the research is up to, and also answering any questions that hospital staff may have about the project.

So far we have had approximately 35 koalas enter the trial. This season we are concentrating on one drug class which does not appear to have side effects in koalas. We are hopeful that these drugs will lead to a successful treatment regime for Chlamydial infections in koalas. We have made increased efforts to locate koalas in early stages of disease as we feel these are the animals most likely to have a successful outcome.

Unfortunately the post mortem room remains busy. Although it is always sad when an animal is found dead, dies or is euthanized, very valuable information is learnt through examining the bodies after death. Approximately half of all animals examined by Jo in the last year exhibited signs of long term (chronic) Chlamydial infection. Although this figure probably does not reflect the level of disease of all Port Macquarie koalas, it does remind us that Chlamydial infection is a very significant disease in our koalas. An interesting aspect emerging is that typical wet bottom stain does not always occur with animals with signs of past disease (reproductive tract cysts). This means that koalas may look completely normal on the outside, but still have irreparable internal damage from Chlamydial infections. We are able to detect this damage with the use of an ultrasound, which shows us large fluid filled cysts in the reproductive tract. These cysts are evidence of past infections and almost always indicate sterility. We are also using DNA detection techniques (PCR testing) to locate subclinical, or carrier animals. These animals look normal on the outside and have normal ultrasound examinations; however they are carrying Chlamydial bacteria. We are finding a number of these animals in Port Macquarie. It seems that the wet bottom and conjunctivitis cases we can see externally are only the tip of the iceberg.

These scenario leads to the intriguing question as to why some animals may carry Chlamydia and not develop serious clinical (external) disease. Researchers in Sydney, such as Sarah Jobbins and Damien Higgins, are working on this very question.

We have tested all the permanent koalas living at KPS for the fungal disease Cryptococcus and found that they were all negative. This is a great relief, as treatment is sometimes unsuccessful and may take many months, or even years. All of the testing of koalas for this disease in the past year has been negative. It seems that Port Macquarie koalas only have a low incidence of this disease.

We are very much looking forward to the proposed development of Yard 10 into individual yards. The trial animals are all currently located in the ICU for hygiene reasons. Allowing the animals to be yarded outside will ease up pressure on the ICU and the volunteers' backs and knees, not to mention the improved psychological welfare of the koalas in being outside. It will also allow more animals to be recruited into the trial. For results to be valid, we need a certain number of animals to complete the trial, so we are keen to recruit enough animals to make the trial as valuable as possible for future koala carers, researchers, zoos and veterinarians.

We are ever grateful from all the help from volunteers, rescuers, team leaders, supervisors and everyone involved at the hospital. Our research could not progress without your input. Special thanks as always to Cheyne for her diligence in helping with trial animals and her innovative ideas.

We are looking forward to a successful and fruitful year of research.

## **CONGRATULATIONS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

Dr Damien Higgins, who is the supervisor of the PhD vet students here at the Koala Hospital as part of the Sydney University drug trial has recently been awarded a prestigious award, and kept very quiet about it all. Sorry Damien, we think it rates a big mention!!!



Damien was awarded the 2006 Barry Munday Recognition Award, which recognises members of the Australian Section of the Wildlife Diseases Association who have made significant contributions to the study of wildlife health.

This award was established in honour of the late Dr Barry Munday, who contributed substantially to the study of wildlife diseases in Australia and who was instrumental in founding the Australian section of WDA (Wildlife Diseases Association).

Congrats and well done.

## BUSHFIRES AND BURNS

With summer upon us, and the temperature rising, the potential for an outbreak of the dreaded summer bushfire increases.

The fact that a large percentage of all bushfires in Australia occur through some form of human interference is a bitter irony that stretches the resources of both the emergency services, home owners and wildlife carers.

For native fauna and flora, it can mean a total wipe-out of habitat and the ecological communities within. Ironically, bushfires are also natural phenomena that create change with many species of plants only germinating post fire.

Whether the fire is a low intensity fire or a crown fire (flames licking the tops of the trees) can often dictate the level of burns suffered by arboreal species such as koalas, possums, birds and some reptiles.

For koalas, the natural instinct when threatened is to climb higher in the tree. In a low intensity fire with little smoke, the koalas' survival is enhanced through retention of some of the trees foliage for food. If the koala descends to the ground to search for further leaf, often the lower parts of the trunk are burnt and smouldering and can badly burn the pads of the koalas' feet. Once on the ground the hot smouldering surface can also cause painful burns. Unless they receive partial or full thickness burns as a result, the koala can heal and survive with minimal long term damage.

A crown fire where both flames and smoke can go hundreds of metres into the air has the potential to wipe out everything in its path, leaving behind a blackened desolate landscape. Occasionally small pockets of bush escape the inferno and become a refuge for species that have the mobility to flee or who were already living there.

Koalas more often than not do not survive a high intensity crown fire. Depending on the heat of the fire, the height of the trees, the amount of smoke and the position the koala is in, can dictate the severity of burns the koala receives.

The Koala Hospital in conjunction with the local wildlife group FAWNA has a fully trained team of Bushfire Wildlife rescuers. The job is hot, long, draining and frustrating but at times rewarding. Rescuers can spend literally weeks searching the burnt out scrub for injured animals. At times, the resilience of wildlife is astounding in them being found alive with horrific burns some days or even weeks later.

When bushfire time is on, the Koala Hospital is a hive of activity with staff and volunteers putting in long hours treating and caring for the many burnt koalas and other native wildlife that come through the doors.

Burns injuries in all native fauna and particularly koalas are a highly controversial and difficult area of wildlife rehabilitation work. Currently a state wide protocol is being compiled to give those working with koalas strict guidelines on injuries that are treatable and those that are not.

As wildlife rehabilitators it is our duty to look at what is ultimately the most humane option for the koala long term. A koala with intensive treatment *may* survive horrific burns, but from a welfare perspective living a life of permanent pain, reduced movement through disfigurement and scarring is not an option we are comfortable with, nor is it our policy to do so.

So, consequently watching the weather each day during the summer period is something we have become quite expert at!!

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*Footnote: Our overseas readers may or may not be aware, that huge bushfires are raging throughout the country at various locations at the time of writing. Victoria, Tasmania, central and western NSW are in the grips of horrific high intensity fires. One particular fire in the Pilliga Scrub near Coonabarabran NSW has potentially decimated what is arguably the biggest population of koalas in Australia. These fires of course would also have a devastating effect on all other species of both flora and fauna. This is not a good scenario to enter into 2007 with.*

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

### The latest with ADOPTAWILDKOALA



The adoption package consists of the new Certificate of Adoption that has the name of the person adopting the koala, a photograph and the name of the koala also the date of adoption. As well as the Certificate the package also contains a story about the adopted koala, two vinyl stickers, one with the KPS Logo and the words "I Have Adopted A Wild Koala", a coloured pamphlet about the Hospital and a booklet about koalas.

If you are wondering what to buy as a gift for someone who "has everything" then this is an ideal solution to your problem.

Our **Adopt A Wild Koala Program** is the major source of fund raising for the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital.

The photos provided are of koalas that are currently included in our Adoption Program and who have been admitted to our hospital, and with the exception of Kempsey Carolina, Cloud and Bonnie Fire they have all been released back into the wild – hence the name Adopt A Wild Koala.

The cost of an adoption is AU\$40 within Australia and AU\$50 overseas per year. The difference in cost is to cover additional postage.

[adopt\\_koala@optusnet.com.au](mailto:adopt_koala@optusnet.com.au)

### Friends of the Koala Hospital

We announced this month the introduction of a new support group called 'Friends of the Koala Hospital'.

I look forward to the inaugural meeting in February 2007. More about that in the next issue.

**Bob Sharpham** 

President

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## THE SUPERVISORS' REPORT

Life at the hospital has been very busy over the last few months. Not only has there been a number of admissions due to motor vehicle accidents and dog attacks (one is always too many) but the number of rescues around the district has increased alarmingly. Is this the result of pressure on the koala population through housing developments in the town reducing valuable habitat??

On some days there appears to be one call after another to remove a koala from either a dangerous situation such as running right down the middle of busy roads, to sitting on bridges, in yards with cranky dogs or recently – sitting on a pile of bulldozed trees. As part of the Sydney University research programme any koala that we would simply rescue and relocate are now being brought into the hospital for a 48 hour period to screen them for sub clinical signs of chlamydial infection (no outward signs of the disease, but possibly a carrier). The exception to this change in procedure is mothers and joeys that if in danger are simply relocated without any intervention and fuss. Obviously, this creates an increase in hospital numbers and leaf collection, but in the long run we are not only gathering vital information on Chlamydia but are in a position to treat sub clinical animals before the disease takes hold. As with all research – its early days yet.

Over the last few months we have had some excellent rain, which has really helped leaf quality and tree growth. We do need follow up rain soon, or the hot January and February temperatures could spell disaster from a fire perspective (see article). We are also hoping that our continual campaign to ask both the locals and the visitors to this area over the holiday period to slow down their driving will have a positive impact in reducing the numbers of koalas hit by cars.

Our volunteer numbers at the hospital are excellent, with many new good people coming on board in a very enthusiastic manner!! All the long term staff are coping well with the continual changes that are a necessity as part of the university research trials.

On behalf of all the staff and volunteers we would like to wish everyone a safe and peaceful Christmas and to look forward to a prosperous and fulfilling 2007 that's full of lots of releases!!!

Cheers, *The Supervisors.*

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## Hospital Report

ADMISSION	NAME	REASON	RESULT
22.09.94	Cloud F	Bushfire Victim	Permanent Resident
6.11.00	Kempsey Carolina F	Head Trauma—Motor Vehicle Accident	Permanent Resident
11.10.01	Bonnie Fire F	Bushfire Victim	Permanent Resident
22.10.04	Tractive Golfer M	Underweight	
04.11.05	Bangalay Roadrunner M	Abscess behind right knee	Transferred to Aust. Walkabout Wildlife Park
21.01.06	Wiruna Lucky F	Cataracts both eyes	
24.01.06	Hamlyn Bev F Joey	Orphaned	Released 28.09.06
29.01.06	Bangalay Blue M	Infected Left hind leg	Euthanased 17.10.06
06.04.06	Treeview Way Sam M	Chlamydia (Wet Bottom) – I.C.U.	Released 19.09.06
30.05.06	Links VTR M Joey	Joey	
26.06.06	Ocean Therese F	Broken Jaw – Motor Vehicle Accident	
26.06.06	Ocean Ken M Joey	Joey of Ocean Therese – Home Care	
05.07.06	Parklands Keith	Knee damage – locked – possible M.V.A.	Transferred to Aust. Walkabout Wildlife Park
11.07.06	Lady Nelson Woody M Joey	Joey	
22.07.06	Hastings Jenny F	Chlamydia - dog attack	Euthanased 15.09.06
26.07.06	Koala Ray M	Wet Bottom (Chlamydia)	Released 29.09.06
20.08.06	Karalee Cal M	Conjunctivitis	Released 25.09.06
22.08.06	Pacific Wandella M	Chlamydia – wet bottom	Euthanased 13.10.06
22.08.06	Nulla Sam M	Chlamydia – wet bottom	Released 25.10.06
28.08.06	Kevin M	Dog Attack	Released 08.09.06
28.08.06	Kendall Kim F	Chlamydia – wet bottom	Euthanased 05.10.06
29.08.06	Oxley Lucky Joey F	Walking on Highway no sign of mother	
03.09.06	Harley Hart M	Suspect Chlamydia (Wet Bottom)	Euthanased 08.09.06
05.09.06	Matthew Flinders M	Found Running on Road – checked	Released 05.09.06
07.09.06	Kingfisher Mandy F	Dog attack – Herniated gut	Euthanased 20.09.06
07.09.06	Mill Street Judy F	On Ground – disorientated	Died 08.09.06
10.09.06	Marbuk Y258 M	Suspect Chlamydia (Wet Bottom)	Released 11.09.06
13.09.06	Regatta Lanaye F	Mild Chlamydia (Wet Bottom)	Released 20.09.06
14.09.06	Hassal Ian M	In Shopping Centre Car Park	Relocated 14.09.06
14.09.06	Spence Swift M	Enlarged lymph nodes – lymphoma	Euthanased 15.09.06
15.09.06	Kennedy Kid M	Motor Vehicle Accident	Dead on Arrival
15.09.06	Hill Street Paddy M	Self Admission – Chlamydia test done	Released 19.09.06
16.09.06	Granite Shayne M	Dog Attack – swollen lymph nodes – Lymphoma	Euthanased 20.09.06
17.09.06	Ocean Joanne F	Motor Vehicle Accident – cataract on eye – W.Bottom	Euthanased 29.11.06
18.09.06	Spendrift Jason M	Dog Attack	Released 29.09.06
20.09.06	Dunbogan Googly M	Found on ground	Dead on Arrival
20.09.06	Pacific Sam M	Infected Left Leg – possible dog attack	Released 11.10.06
22.09.06	Cathie Trellis M	Conjunctivitis -+ Lymphsarcoma	Euthanased 26.09.06
24.09.06	Belah Frankie F	Enlarged Lymph nodes – lymphoma	Euthanased 29.09.06
24.09.06	Belah Irwin M	Joey of Belah Frankie	
02.10.06	Oxley Sooney M	Motor Vehicle Accident	Released 11.10.06
02.10.06	Matthew Flinders M	Motor Vehicle Accident	Died 02.10.06
04.10.06	Gore Jessie M	Dog Attack	Released 05.10.06
06.10.06	Central Kane M	Motor Vehicle Accident + puncture wound L Leg	
09.10.06	Waniora Coastline M	Disorientated	Released 24.10.06
10.10.06	Hastings Laurel F	In Swimming Pool	Euthanased 05.11.06
10.10.06	Denning Alena F	Chlamydia (Wet Bottom)	
11.10.06	Gore Jessie M	Dog Attack – Fractured skull	Euthanased 12.10.06
11.10.06	Orion Jenny F	Found on ground	Released 24.10.06
18.10.06	Livingston Robyn F	Dog Attack	Died 20.10.06

ADMISSION	NAME	REASON	RESULT
18.10.06	Bonny Jude M	Conjunctivitis	
19.10.06	Oxley Trish F	On Roundabout	Released 22.10.06
20.10.06	Hastings Nissan M	Motor Vehicle Accident	Dead on Arrival
20.10.06	Doyles River Tami (f)	Motor Vehicle Accident	Released 10.11.06
21.10.06	Granite Murray M	Dog Attack	Released 26.10.06
21.10.06	Bangalay Peter M	Conjunctivitis – heart defect	Died 08.11.06
21.10.06	Chisholm Vine (F)	Found on Ground	Euthanased 21.10.06
24.10.06	Oxley Ken (Pinkie)	Found on ground	Died
24.10.06	Limeburners Ashley M	Dog Attack and conjunctivitis	Euthanased 27.11.06
24.10.06	Hastings Dane M	Dog Attack	Released 27.10.06
28.10.06	Clifton Jewel F	Dog Attack	Released 30.10.06
29.10.06	Vendal Benni F	In swimming pool	Released 30.10.06
30.10.06	Spinnaker Petal F	In Yard with Dogs – checked	Released 30.10.06
01.11.06	Acacia Tim M	Conjunctivitis	
01.11.06	Dunbogan Surfer M	Drowned	Dead on Arrival
01.11.06	Fernhall Michelle F	Chlamydia (Wet Bottom) – advanced	Euthanased 01.11.06
04.11.06	Kadina Lisa F	Found on Ground	Self Release 15.11.06
05.11.06	Hudson Nick M	Wet Bottom	
06.11.06	Cathie Chepana F	Advanced Chlamydia	Euthanased 07.11.06
06.11.06	Rose Buster M	Motor Vehicle Accident	Released 09.11.06
07.11.06	Dungbogan Colleen F	Fell from tree – head trauma	Euthanased 07.11.06
07.11.06	Grandview Milicia F	On Fence near pool and dogs – checked	Released 10.11.06
08.11.09	Morrish Steven M	Running on road – checked	Released 10.11.06
09.11.06	Hill Street Paddy M	Self Admit	Released 10.11.06
12.11.06	H.C. 100 M	Low in tree – checked	Released 14.11.06
12.11.06	Blair Thomas M	Dog Attack	
12.11.06	Sapphire Dane M	In yard with dogs – checked	Released 16.11.06
13.11.06	Calwalla Paul M	Chlamydia (Wet Bottom)	
14.11.06	Ocean Jan + Ocean Joey	Motor Vehicle Accident	Dead on Arrival
14.11.06	Roto Bill M	Disorientated	Self Release 15.11.06
15.11.06	Cathie Shannan Liam M	Conjunctivitis L eye	
16.11.06	Cathie Clay Gem F		Dead on Arrival
19.11.06	Lake Danni F	Dog attack	Released 27.11.06
20.11.06	Watonga Billy M		Relocated 20.11.06
21.11.06	Ellenborough Kelly F	In Shed with Dogs	
22.11.06	Slade Popeye F	(l) eye exophthalmous	Euthanased 23.11.06
27.11.06	Cathie John Joey	Orphaned – Home Care	
29.11.06	Everard Cutie (F)	Found on Road - checked	
29.11.06	Elizabeth Noddy (M)	Eye problems	

### Permanent Residents



Cloud



Kempsey Carolina



Bonny Fire

### **PORT MACQUARIE:**

SEPT.	Permanent 3	Treated 37	Released 11	Euthanized 7	Dead/Died 3	Admitted 18
OCT	Permanent 3	Treated 38	Released 13	Euthanized 5	Dead/Died 4	Admitted 23
NOV	Permanent 3	Treated 41	Released 13	Euthanized 7	Dead/Died 4	Admitted 26





## *Innes Point*

Innes Point first came into the hospital in February 2002 due to an old dog attack wound than had not healed properly. After being treated he was released with a clean bill of health.

In March, 2003 he was admitted into the Hospital for a second time after a resident telephoned to say that he had trouble with one of his hind legs when walking and climbing. On examination, it was found that he was bruised and tender in the abdomen and right hind leg and that the left knee was stiff and swollen. Was it a motor vehicle accident; a fall from a tree or another dog attack? – Only Innes Point knows the answer to that one! He was x-rayed and it was found that his knee joint had severe damage that required a long course of antibiotics and anti-inflammatory. The damage was so severe that we had to settle for his knee joint, permanently “locking” into place.

Innes Point spent a number of months rehabilitation time up trees in the Hospital yards to develop strength in his weakened muscles. Eventually this was achieved, with him literally leaping from branch to branch and he also gained a pleasing amount of weight. He was released back into his territory in late September and a number of local people have since reported seeing him happily going about his business doing what koalas normally do.

Well done Innes!

DISCLAIMER

ABN 74060854479

The Koala Preservation Society of NSW Inc. and the management committee do not accept any liability for the results of any actions taken or not taken, on the basis of information given or discussed with groups or other organised events, meetings and/or for information provided by speakers or for any information published for or on behalf of the organisation, its organs and officers.

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**NEW EMAIL ADDRESSES FROM 2007**

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