



Gum Tips

Quarterly Newsletter of the
Koala Hospital Port Macquarie

December
2008



Inside

Cover Story – <i>Westhaven Barry</i>	2
Media/Communications Report	3
Friends of the Koala Hospital	4
From the President	5
Why Habitat is so Important	6, 7
Hospital Report	8, 9
Maintenance Report	10
Supervisor's Report	11

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Westhaven Barry ("Bazza")

In early July this year, a home owner noticed a scruffy, bedraggled "joey" sitting in the middle of the road and, believing the "joey" had been hit by a car, called the Koala Hospital. The "joey" was in very poor condition, very dehydrated and quiet, and remained in home care for a few days being given extra fluids and supportive nutrition.

The "joey", as it turned out, is an adult male whom we called Barry (as well as a host of other affectionate names such as "the garden gnome", "Bazza" and "the angry ant"). Not only does Barry have a number of health issues, it is puzzling that he was found in a busy area west of Laurieton not generally known as a koala habitat area. How he ended up there is interesting!

The population of koalas found just east of where Bazza was picked up – the Laurieton, Dunbogan and Camden Head koalas – are generally quite distinct from koalas in Lake Cathie or Port Macquarie. A river separating Laurieton, Dunbogan and Camden Head from Lake Cathie/Port Macquarie in the north appears to have created a geographical barrier affecting the koala populations in these regions. As a result the Dunbogan, Laurieton and Camden Head koalas could possibly be a distinct group. It's not unusual for staff at the Koala



Hospital to "recognise" a new koala in the treatment room as coming from Dunbogan, owing to his/her chocolate brown fur, the tell-tale long pointy nose and narrow jawline.

And Barry definitely fits the mould here! He has a long, narrow head, a very pointy nose and funny little beady eyes.



But having the "Dunbogan head" is a minor cosmetic detail for Bazza whose main affliction is his quite pronounced kyphosis/scoliosis of the spine (*kyphosis* – curved out, *scoliosis* – curved to the side, and *lordosis* – curved in). Barry is very short in body length, possesses short spindly limbs and the weight and appearance (from a distance) of a weaned juvenile koala. Consequently, Bazza is no alpha male, and not breeding material! It's highly likely he has been pushed out of the breeding population's habitat since a koala like Barry would rank low on the hierarchical scale. This explains why he was found, not only in an unusual place, but in such poor condition. If he had not been brought into care, he probably would not have lasted more than a few days.

Here at the Hospital, Bazza has won the hearts of anyone who goes near him. He has a quirky, grumpy personality that is very funny to observe. He absolutely loves his daily formula, grabbing at the volunteer to get it and which he usually dribbles everywhere. He definitely doesn't mind all the attention he receives. Recently, Bazza must have been feeling much better because he somehow escaped from his yard, and tried to get very romantic with Kempsey Carolina (in the next yard). Kempsey Carolina, simply turned her nose up, thought that his approach was a silly idea and told him in no uncertain terms to go. One very indignant and rejected Bazza was removed and placed in Yard 7 (the escape proof yard) much to the amusement of the volunteers.

Bazza's prognosis for a future return to the wild is uncertain and doubtful. At this point in time, we are gaining more knowledge from him about spinal deformities and breeding abnormalities. As long as there is plenty of fresh eucalypt leaf, lots of formula and plenty of attention, Bazza doesn't mind life at the hospital one little bit.

Media/Communications Report

Bonny Fire and Joey Blaze have certainly been the stars of the Koala Hospital these past three months; a big hit everywhere. We've had a lot of media coverage on Prime, *Port Macquarie News*, *Coffs Harbour Advocate*, *Mid North Coast Observer*, AAP news wire, Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*, *Holiday with Kids* magazine and New Zealand's *Destination* magazine. Much of this was due to Geoff Best's great photo of Bonny and Blaze and Gabrielle Brewer's **media release** (NSW Tourism). Another of Gabrielle's release, encouraging people to **adopt a wild koala** for Christmas, has just been released with stellar results.

Family Fun Day also received input through Prime News, ABC, Star FM Radio and the What's On website. Our **koala ambulance** gained attention not only in Port Macquarie News and on NBN, but also as an entrant in the Carnival of the Pines.

Cheyne commented on **MVAs, dog attacks and Chlamydia** to Port Macquarie News and Prime. A local ABC interview with Cheyne discussing koala habitat was also aired on Simon Marne's Saturday morning show.

On behalf of the Koala Hospital, I attended the Port Macquarie/Hastings Council's **consumer workshop** run by Cummins Nitro Advertising agency, aiming

to develop a distinctive brand for Greater Port Macquarie. Along with Herbie, I also attended **Newcastle Permanent's cocktail party** celebrating their third year in Port Macquarie.

Jodi McKay (Minister for Tourism) visited the Koala Hospital to launch the new Mid North Coast Region Tourism Organisation's "Nature's Playground" campaign. This was aired on Prime and reported in Port Macquarie News. A special adoption certificate was presented to the minister and she seemed very pleased with this gift.

Andrew Greenaway, Regional Marketing Manager for NSW Tourism, also visited the Koala Hospital. He was given a tour and introduced to some of our patients.

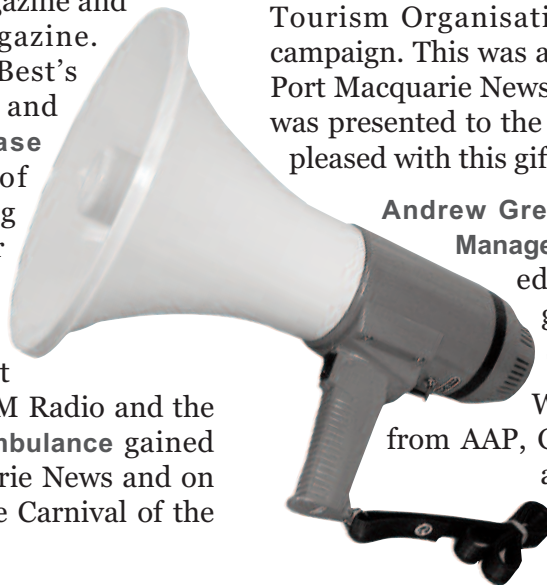
We had **visiting journalists** from AAP, German and Swiss magazines, as well as Wauchope Community Radio.

On 6 December, *Sydney Weekend* will repeat a film taken at the Koala Hospital earlier visit this year.

The **Festival of the Sun** has been offered a tour of the Hospital as one its prizes.

The **Koala Hospital Information Sheet** has been updated at the Information Centre.

Helen Meers **Media Co-ordinator**



Adopt
Bonny
Fire or
Blaze!

See www.koalahospital.org.au/adopt/koalas.php

Friends

of the Koala Hospital

Koala Hospital Calendar 2009 Our main objective during November and December is to maximise sales of the Koala Hospital 2009 calendar. To this end we are attending markets at Westport High School on the 2nd and 4th Sundays each month and Laurieton Riverwalk on the 3rd Sunday.

So far we have been moderately successful and expect sales to improve as Christmas creeps up. There will also be an extra market at Laurieton on January 4th, as there is a large contingent of holiday-makers expected in town at that time. I have booked a space and hope the calendar will do well.

Night Rescue Phone Duty I have been working for the past few months on a program to involve a number of mildly disabled people to handle the night phone duties on a regular basis.

With help from Tom Kennedy, we have held our first introduction meeting on Wednesday Nov 26th at the Koala Hospital with four (4) likely candidates. Their initial response is encouraging and I am just waiting for the candidates to look over the information they have been given and to get back to me with their answers. If each can take the phone on one night per week it will relieve some of our other volunteers of the extra duty. I expect to have the program fully operational early in the New Year.

Adopt A Wild Koala Under the watchful eye of Lorraine and Jan, the Adoption program is bouncing along nicely. We have completed almost 700 adoptions from Australia and overseas to date and we have the Christmas/New Year/School holiday period ahead of us before the end of our fiscal year on 31 March 2009. Hopefully the global financial crisis will not impact us too heavily, and with any sort of good fortune, we should at least equal last year's record adoption figures.



Geoff and Oxley Griffin

Bonny Blaze has now been added to the Adoption portfolio and is creating lots of interest.

Seasons Greetings "Friends" would like to wish all Members, supporters and Gum Tips readers a safe and enjoyable Festive Season.

Geoff Best
Chairman



HELP
us to help koalas

- Become a member
- Adopt a wild koala
- Volunteer
- Donate

Koala Hospital Calendar 2009

ON SALE NOW!



From the President

This year has been an exceptional one for the Koala Hospital – we have our new Koala Ambulance out and about and National Parks & Wildlife have built a new toilet block for visitors to the Koala Hospital and Roto House (an historic home next door).

The staff and volunteers have exceeded themselves in the way they care for our koalas and with the fundraising that keeps us in business.

With the holiday season about to hit us we are grateful for the work that the volunteers do in the yards, the grounds, the kiosk and directly with the koalas, as well as those going out for rescues day and night.

If you are in Port Macquarie, call in: we are open every day of the year and admission is free.

I wish everyone a happy Christmas fantastic new year.



Bob Sharpham

President



Why Habitat

For a koala (or any organism for that matter) to live a “natural” life, he/she needs warmth, shelter, food, protection from harm and access to others of the same species to reproduce.

Even though koalas live solitary lives, they actually belong to and are part of a highly ordered structured hierarchical society. The alpha males and alpha females occupy the prime habitat within the colony with lower ranking koalas occupying lesser quality habitat.

A koala's home range is dictated not only by the amount of trees but also by the quality of trees within their area. Consequently if the trees are sparsely scattered or there are not many actual food trees the koalas can eat within that area, the home range has to become much bigger. Not all trees within koalas home ranges are used for food. Some are simply used to sleep in (camping trees) and some are for mating (romance trees). Eucalypts are notorious for being unpalatable and toxic at various times during the year and also at various stages of their growth. Trees under a certain height and girth around the trunk are not palatable at all and are

thus ignored throughout the year until they reach a suitable height. This is important to know for replanted, revegetated areas or areas that have been heavily logged.

Alpha males' and alpha females' home ranges overlap, as do the lesser ranking females and lesser ranking males. Mostly the koalas avoid contact with each other.

habitat /'hæbətæt/, *n.*
the native environment or kind of place where a given animal or plant naturally lives or grows
MACQUARIE DICTIONARY

Fighting between males is uncommon as the energy involved is too costly to the koala, plus smaller and lower ranking males will not attempt to tackle a much bigger, more robust male (the alpha male). Young subadult males tend to live on the periphery of the

colony in the poor quality, marginal habitat and generally exist “under the radar” of the other koalas. Consequently young males are often the ones seen running up roads or getting themselves in trouble as they seek somewhere to go, and statistically many die during this period. This ordered koala society works well when the forest is untouched or the habitat is enough to sustain all the koalas living in the population.

When habitat is removed for housing development or



is so important ...



agricultural purposes, the highly structured koala society breaks down. Koalas are forced to occupy either very small home ranges with not enough trees to sustain them, or alternatively end up in giant home ranges with trees so far apart that they have to descend from the trees, negotiate urban obstacles such as roads, fences and buildings, as well as walk long distances seeking food. This is not only costly in energy expenditure but it places the koala in a hugely vulnerable position. Being forced to live closely together puts huge stress on the koalas who are often unable to cope. The result is a suppressed immune system, lower quality nutrition intake and then diseases begin to be expressed such as chlamydial infections.

To put this in human terms, if someone came along and bulldozed our house and all our neighbours houses and we were then taken away and expected to live in the backyards of some other peoples homes – imagine the result! This would create great anxiety and pressure on humans with all sorts of stress-related health issues emerging, even to the point of outbreaks of diseases.

It's a well known fact that violence, poor health and other social problems arise when humans are forced to live in large numbers (eg: high density estates) too close together. Apart from the fact that koalas are not violent animals, being forced to live too closely together or translocated to another area, results in similar problems.

Sadly, too many people think that when forested areas are stripped bare for development, koalas can simply be caught and taken "into the bush somewhere else" and let go and all will be well and they will be live happily ever after. It doesn't work that way. Koalas stay in their home ranges either for the entire period of their lives or until a higher ranking animal pushes them out.

Removing koalas after their habitat has been destroyed and relocating them "somewhere else" usually results in the death of these koalas since the hierarchical balance between koalas in a one area cannot be transposed to the new habitat. They may also be placed in areas that already have an existing population of koalas. Dumping "foreign" koalas into another social population causes huge conflict and the new animals will be forced out. As well as disruptions to the koala hierarchy, there is also the possibility that the eucalyptus trees in the new area may not be suitable or palatable for the relocated koalas.

As more and more valuable habitat is removed and koalas are forced into living too close together in the remaining viable habitat then the pressures on the population will continue to cause disease manifestation, being hit by cars and attacked by dogs etc.

Preservation of the remaining habitat and restoration of old destroyed habitat is critical to ensure the long-term survival of the koala. It's still within our grasp to achieve this goal but it's up to all of us to make sure it happens.

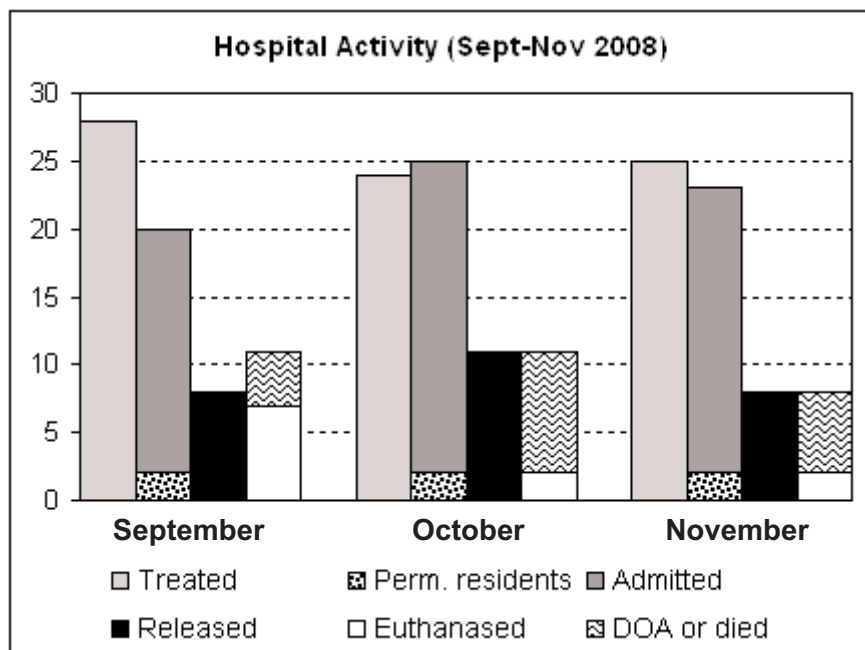


Hospital Activity Report



Admission	Name	Reason	Result
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 – scoliosis of spine	Treating
	Birthday Girl F	Severe arthritis right hip	Treating
10.05.08	Mimosa Oscar M	Chlamydia	Released 1.10.08
20.05.08	Dunbogan Scott M	Injured left femur	
11.07.08	Westhaven Barry M	Scoliosis of spine	
18.08.08	Calwalla Sharon F	Chlamydia	Euthanased 17.09.09
20.08.08	Hastie Ray M	Chlamydia and conjunctivitis	Euthanased 04.09.08
20.08.08	Briarwood Crest M	Conjunctivitis	Released 17.09.09
22.08.08	Halyard Linda F	Chlamydia	Euthanased 23.10.08
28.08.08	Marbuk Tilpa	Drinking lots of water and growth on scapula	Euthanased 02.09.08
28.08.08	Ocean Shelley F	Motor vehicle accident – homecare	Released 10.10.08
29.08.08	Riverside Roach M	Motor vehicle accident	Released 18.09.09
31.08.08	Nowendoc Nessa F	Motor vehicle accident – homecare	Returned to Uralla 29.09.08
02.09.08	Sherwood Lilah F	Motor vehicle accident	Euthanased 13.09.08
03.09.08	Watonga Wonder M	Dog attack	Released 25.09.08
09.09.08	Ocean Golfina F	Flat, moribund	Euthanased 09.09.08
09.09.08	Elizabeth Noddy M	Cataracts both eyes	
10.09.08	Lookout Harry M	Left eye	Released 11.09.08
11.09.08	McLaren Elvina F	Chlamydia	Released 03.11.08
13.09.08	Nulla Roslyn F	Chlamydia	Euthanased 17.09.09
13.09.08	Spence Lily F	Chlamydia	Released 27.10.08
14.09.08	Ocean Rosendahl M	Motor vehicle accident	Dead on Arrival
19.09.08	Crestwood Ellen F	Suspect chlamydia	Released 25.09.08
19.09.08	Crestwood Frank M	Motor Vehicle accident	Dead on Arrival
20.09.08	Allunga Agro M	Dog attack	Escaped 30.09.08
22.09.08	Coastlands Steve M	In dangerous area	Relocated 22.09.09
23.09.08	Dunbogan Anne F	Found on Beach	Dead on arrival
24.09.08	Roto Errol M Joey	Found on ground near Roto House	Dead on arrival
25.09.08	Bellevue Husky M	Dog attack	
25.09.08	Oceania F	Enlarged Lymph nodes/abscess tooth	Euthanased 26.09.08
26.09.08	L'house Beach Michelle	Found on Beach	Released 30.09.08
03.10.09	Table Glen M	Lost front claw	Released 05.10.08
04.10.08	Lord Nicole F	In dangerous area – checked	Released 05.10.08
04.10.08	Roto Victoria F	Lying on ground	Died 31.10.08
05.10.08	Allunga Agro M	Re-captured	Released 10.10.08
05.10.08	Pacific H'way Tammy F	Conjunctivitis – both eyes - blind	Euthanased 26.11.08
06.10.08	Hastings Grace F	In yard with dogs – checked	Released 07.10.08
08.10.08	Yalluma Faye	Attacked by birds	Released 08.10.08
08.10.08	Cathie Petal F	In dangerous area – checked	Released 08.10.08
10.10.08	Settlement Point Bea F	Joey fell 20m onto oyster rocks – homecare	
14.10.08	Ocean Shelley F	Found on ground	Euthanased 20.10.08
15.10.08	Lord Unlucky F	Motor vehicle accident	Dead on Arrival
15.10.08	H.R.D. Maree F	In dangerous area – on roundabout	Released 15.10.08
17.10.08	Dunbogan Romana F	Fall from tree	Died 17.10.08

Admission	Name	Reason	Result
19.10.08	H.R.D. Ben M	Motor vehicle accident	Dead on Arrival
24.10.08	Oxley Hayley F	Motor vehicle accident	Released 14.11.08
26.10.08	Emerald Downs Dam M	Blind – drowned	Dead on Arrival
27.10.08	Cathie Alex F	Conjunctivitis	Released 20.11.08
27.10.08	Crescent Head Surf M	Motor vehicle accident	Dead on arrival
28.10.08	Wilson Dane M	Dog attack	Dead on Arrival
29.10.08	Pacific H'way Patrick M	Motor vehicle accident	Dead on Arrival
29.10.08	Dunbogan Marie	Lying on ground	Dead on Arrival
31.10.08	Horton Clarence M	Attacked by cows – checked	Released 31.10.08
31.10.08	Kamona Andre M	Chlamydia	
02.11.08	Kooloonbung Charlie M	Lying on ground	Died 02.11.08
05.11.08	Gordon Rooster F	Motor vehicle accident	
05.11.08	Garage Girl F	In dangerous area – checked	Released 06.11.08
09.11.08	Dorrigo Carol F	Motor vehicle accident	Dead on Arrival
11.11.08	Bowden Sam M	Dog attack	Released 25.11.08
12.11.08	McLaren Elvina F	Found on ground	Died 14.11.08
12.11.08	Wyandra Joanna F	Suspect chlamydia	Released 14.11.08
15.11.08	Bonny Hills Freddo M	Bilateral keratoconjunctivitis	
16.11.08	Treeview Way Sam M	Conjunctivitis	
21.11.08	Rowthorne Earlette F	Chlamydia	Euthanased 24.11.08
21.11.08	Ruins Way Bandit M	Motor Vehicle accident	
21.11.08	Central S.E.S. M	Infection left front leg	
22.11.08	The Summit Growser M	Low in tree; rapid breathing – checked	Released 23.11.08
24.11.08	Oxley Rick M	Motor vehicle accident	Died 25.11.08
25.11.08	Newport Bridge Gloria F	In dangerous area – checked	Released 27.11.08
26.11.08	Livingstone Bailey M	Motor Vehicle accident	Dead on Arrival
26.11.08	Horton Clarence F	In dangerous area	Relocated 27.11.08
27.11.08	Wiruna Judy F	Motor Vehicle accident	Dead on Arrival
27.11.08	Hibiscus Homer M	Suspect chlamydia	Released 28.11.08
27.11.08	Roto Abigail F	Suspect chlamydia	Released 28.11.08
29.11.08	Lighthouse Noni F	Suspect chlamydia	
29.11.08	Kulai Rosemary F	Motor vehicle accident	



Barbara Barrett and Ocean Therese

Supervisor's Report



Life at the hospital has been unbelievably busy, with a large amount of admissions over the last few months. For example we have had eleven admissions just in the last week. Thankfully most of them have not been serious ones, but nonetheless we still have had a few admissions of MVA koalas who were either DOA or died in care.

This chlamydial season appears to be an “eye” one with the majority of admissions being conjunctivitis related. Last year they were all wet bottoms, the year before was also an “eye” year. Sydney University has also observed that it seems to be a continual pattern where it tends to swing from eyes one year to bottoms the next and at this point there really isn't a good explanation why this phenomenon occurs.

Thankfully even though admission numbers have been high, we certainly are releasing a good number too. Many of the admissions are of course repeat offenders, who commonly seem to be finding themselves in some funny places. One rescue of note was having to retrieve Garage Girl from a tree just behind the lights at the corner of Horton and William street a few weeks ago. What started out as a simple rescue ended up a right circus with police blocking the road, four Koala Hospital staff and finally the fire brigade who just happened to be going past rocking up with their truck and big ladder and all of us still failing to catch Garage Girl leaping from branch to branch. We gave up after 20

minutes, set the trap and she was caught at 9pm that night.

The koala trap has proven such a useful tool for rescues, we are now in the middle of purchasing and putting together another one for captures. There have been many times we could have done with two in operation at the one time. The koala trap not only has an 85% successful capture rate, it's also a much less stressful way to do the job...for the koala and the rescuer.

National Geographic has just spent another two weeks filming with us and will be back in a few months time. It sounds like this documentary will be a good one, as they have filmed a lot of koala work all over Australia. Of course, given the unique nature of what we do, the Koala Hospital is the primary focus of the documentary.

Even though volunteer numbers are high, with the Christmas period looming, it would be great if all staff can indicate their availability.

On behalf of the koalas, I would like to say a big thank you to everyone for all their hard work and effort during the year and wish everyone a safe and peaceful festive season. See you all at the Christmas party on 12 December.

Cheers,
Cheyne Flanagan Hospital Supervisor



Susan from *National Geographic*



Cheyne and Ocean Therese

Maintenance Report

⇒ Maintenance team of five went bush on Sunday 2 November—two men short of the number required!

⇒ Boards laid along path at Lord Street side of Hospital (awaiting National Parks & Wildlife Service approval to lay filling).

⇒ Shelves now installed in storage shed and spaces for two BBQs provided.

⇒ A new extendable pole for leaf collection purchased and a cutting head fitted. Chris Rowlands (Habitat Co-ordinator) says it's the "best pole so far". Permission required to purchase two more poles at a cost of approximately \$60 each.

⇒ Materials for bush house in habitation yard have recently been delivered. Surface of yard and drainage to be considered before commencing construction.

⇒ Various gunyahs in ICUs and yards fitted with fresh forks and runners.

⇒ Wooden ramp for wheelchair access to dayroom now construction. I suggest painting with non-slip paint before fitting into place.

⇒ Congratulations are deserved by Les Gregson for the wonderful mural he painted on the front face of the puppet stand. Surely he has hidden talent! A few finishing additions required before its debut at the Christmas Party on 12 December.

⇒ The last two Wednesdays have been rather wet and have somewhat curtailed our activities. Thanks go to our "crew" who "battled on regardless"; e.g. Max and his team for rebuilding leaf rack outside of leaf shed.

Brian Westoby Maintenance Co-ordinator

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Gum Tips

the official newsletter
of the Koala
Preservation Society
of NSW Inc. is
published quarterly.



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If undelivered please return to:
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PO Box 236
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Print Post Approved – 242 798/00014

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