

Cape Otway Koala Management Actions

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Barwon South West Region (BSW)



1 Introduction

The Cape Otway koala management actions aim to achieve healthy native forest and a sustainable population of healthy koalas at Cape Otway. The management of koalas in Victoria presents complex challenges due to the distribution and movement of the species across land tenures. This document considers a range of management options for Cape Otway and provides recommendations for actions to achieve this vision while supporting the same vision more broadly across Victoria.

The four key objectives of the actions for Cape Otway are:

- Protection of koala welfare
- Short and long-term population management (including koalas in the surrounding landscape)
- Protection and restoration of habitat
- Communications and stakeholder engagement.

A range of short and long term actions is required across land tenures. Some actions can be implemented immediately, some are dependent upon further information and assessment and many are subject to funding.

The proposed short-term actions are summarised as follows:

- Koala and habitat health assessment
- Habitat mapping and species distribution modelling to identify possible translocation sites
- Translocation trial and concurrent welfare intervention
- Large scale translocation/s if habitat available and trial successful.

The proposed long-term actions are summarised as follows:

- Fertility control
- Habitat protection and restoration
- Communications and stakeholder engagement.

A collaborative approach with key stakeholders is required to support the proposed actions as a significant proportion of these actions are required on private land.

1.1. Context

A sustainable koala density is believed to be approximately one koala per hectare (Victoria's Koala Management Strategy, 2004). Inspections on private land at Cape Otway conducted by Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) Barwon South West (BSW) staff suggest current densities of a minimum of four koalas per hectare with densities in the north between 4 and 11 per hectare. A recent assessment conducted by the Conservation Ecology Centre (CEC) found a density of 17 koalas per hectare over approximately 26 hectares on one property.

Manna Gum trees in many areas are showing signs of recovery following the 2013 koala population crash and welfare interventions, however, remaining canopy cover is poor in some areas. In areas to the north of Bimbi Park significant Manna Gum defoliation is occurring.

1.2. Vision and Objectives

The long term vision for Cape Otway is healthy native forest and a healthy sustainable koala population.

The specific objectives are:

- Healthy native forest
- Sustainable koala population
- Protection of koala welfare.

1.3. Definition of Success

The outcomes will be measured by clearly defined success criteria. Some of these criteria require preliminary work to be undertaken as identified below.

Outcome	Measure of success
Healthy native forest	Habitat health maintained above intervention trigger levels (to be developed)
Sustainable koala population	Koala population maintained at sustainable level (level to be determined by population modelling)
Protection of koala welfare	Average koala health body condition score regularly 3 or above

1.4. Management Actions

Management action	Timeframe
Conduct koala health assessment to determine current health status	Short term
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health checks at representative locations across private land• Includes fertility control of healthy koalas and may include euthanasia of unhealthy animals (if required to alleviate suffering)	
Develop habitat health trigger for initiating management actions	Short term
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Involves assessment of habitats and health of koalas in those habitats and changes over time	
Undertake habitat mapping and species distribution modelling to identify potential sites for small (including trial) and large-scale (100s) translocations	Short term
Conduct possible health and welfare intervention concurrent with translocation trial to prevent short-term welfare issues and reduce risk of future starvation and select animals for translocation trial. Includes:	Short term
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health checks• Fertility control• Euthanasia of unhealthy koalas• Selection of animals for trial translocation	

Management action	Timeframe
Translocation trial concurrent with welfare intervention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent upon results of habitat mapping and species distribution modelling • To be conducted in conjunction with welfare intervention 	Medium term
Determine carrying capacity and population target for Cape Otway habitats	Short term
Large scale translocation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent upon results of habitat mapping, species distribution modelling and trial translocation • Dependent upon determination of carrying capacity • Dependent upon development of translocation plan • Includes euthanasia of unhealthy koalas and fertility control of healthy koalas 	Medium term
Long term ongoing population management via fertility control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent upon development of habitat health trigger • Dependent upon determination of carrying capacity • Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development of landscape plan ○ Development of governance, funding and resourcing strategy • Includes euthanasia of unhealthy koalas when required • Includes ongoing implementation of community and engagement plan 	Medium-long term
Complementary Actions	
Continue existing habitat protection and restoration (CEC, local landowners)	Long term
Progress policy and other arrangements for rehoming juvenile koalas into captivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be conducted in parallel with welfare interventions 	Medium term