



MEDIA RELEASE

2 June 2017

KOALA AMBULANCE HITS THE ROAD IN PORT STEPHENS

Following a bushfire season that saw more than 9,000 hectares of local koala habitat destroyed, rescuers have purchased a new koala 'ambulance' with the help of Port Stephens Council and Hunter Water.

Port Stephens Koalas is a volunteer organisation working to preserve the dwindling koala population in some of the Hunter's last remaining active koala habitat. The organisation regularly responds to calls of injured or at-risk koalas, taking them into care and nursing them to health before releasing them back into the bush.

Port Stephens Council Secretary Ron Land said with the local koala population in decline, and recent bushfires devastating prime habitat, Port Stephens Council and Hunter Water had stepped in to fund a rescue vehicle to respond to distress calls.

"Now, more than ever, our volunteers at Port Stephens Koalas need to respond as quickly as possible when a koala is in danger.

"During the recent bushfires, we had to rely on volunteers from the Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service to recover animals from off-road areas and hard-to-reach spots.

"Now, thanks to the generosity of Port Stephens Council and Hunter Water, we'll be able to respond faster to calls of koalas in distress with this fit-for-purpose vehicle, as well as being able to transport them safely as they receive treatment during recovery," he said.

Port Stephens Council General Manager Wayne Wallis said this is just one element of Council's broader strategy to protect local koalas.

"Our region has one of the last remaining significant koala populations on the east coast of Australia, so we carry a heavy responsibility.

"Port Stephens Council has been active in both working to protect habitat and supporting organisations such as Port Stephens Koalas who are dedicated to preserving and growing the koala population.

"We're pleased to join with Hunter Water in funding this rescue vehicle that we hope will mean more koalas saved and returned safely to their habitat," he said.

Hunter Water Managing Director Jim Bentley said Hunter Water was committed to supporting local communities and promoting sustainability in the region.

"Hunter Water is delighted to partner with Port Stephens Council to support a community-led initiative that preserves the local koala population, an iconic feature of our region which is tragically under threat.

"We believe we have an important role to play in ensuring the sustainable growth of the Hunter region, and this includes promoting and protecting our natural environment for future generations to enjoy."

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