

Urban koalas

The Redlands Coast has one of the most significant urban koala populations in Australia. You can see koalas in our parks, street trees, schoolyards and backyards. Even the Cleveland central business district has its own population of koalas.

It is very important for an urban koala to be able to move freely across the landscape to access food trees. Individual backyard trees and street trees play a vital role in providing food as well as stepping stones to food trees.



Koala on a café umbrella in Cleveland CBD

Mythbusting – the facts about urban koalas

- Our backyards are part of a koala's home range.
- Urban koalas are urban koalas. It is not safer for them to be taken away and put in the bush. This would only place them in another koala's home range and confuse them. They will try to return to their home range and this can bring them into unnecessary contact with life threatening obstacles such as cars and dogs.
- Koalas will use trees other than eucalypts for refuge and as stepping stones.
- Koalas know where they are and where they are going. It is important to leave healthy koalas alone.
- Koalas are most active between dusk and dawn, but will move around during the day. They will move if they are stressed, disturbed, too hot, too cold or just to change food trees.
- Seasonally, koalas are most active from July to December, when the previous year's young are dispersing.
- Juvenile koalas leave their mother's home range to find one of their own. During this time they are often seen in urban backyards.
- Koalas do not hibernate or go away during winter. They are just less active, less vocal and harder to see. They are often tucked into the fork of a tree or up high catching some sun.
- Changes in movement pathways such as the construction of fences, tree removal, building construction, road works and changes in lighting can confuse and disorient koalas. This can increase the onset of stress-related diseases such as Chlamydia. However, it is best to let them find their pathway instead of moving them.



Threats to urban koalas

Tree removal

Problem: By removing backyard trees, koalas will have to spend more time on the ground to get to their next tree. This brings them in close contact with dogs and cars.

Solution: Retain and/or plant trees in your backyard where suitable.

Roads

Problem: Roads are often part of a koala's home range. Koalas regularly need to cross roads to reach their next food tree when looking for mates during breeding season or when young are dispersing (July to December).

Solution: Drive carefully at night and be aware that koalas cross our roads, especially from July to December.

Unfriendly fences

Problem: Backyard fences can impede koala movement. They can also trap koalas in a yard.

Solution: Make sure your fences are koala friendly and enable koalas to move safely and easily through your yard. You can put a wooden plank or large pole/branch against your fence to help a koala escape your yard.



© Claire Bool
Help koalas escape your yard

Swimming pools

Problem: Although koalas can swim, swimming pools are difficult for koalas to climb out of and they often drown.

Solution: Float a rope (approximately 10cm thick) in your swimming pool, or place a board across one corner, so koalas can escape if they fall in. When installing a pool, use a beach style design.

Dogs

Problem: Koalas are often attacked by dogs as they move through our backyards.

Solution: Keep your dogs restrained or confined at night. Check the trees in your yard for koalas and alert your neighbours if you see one.

Report a sick or injured koala to Redlands 24hr Wildlife Rescue Service on 3833 4031.