



# Fact Sheet #1

## Koalas & the Little River

A few koalas persist near the Little River north of Balliang Creek, but their future is perilous. Targeted planting beside waterways could ensure their survival, and possibly re-colonisation downstream. This fact sheet explains where they are, why they've declined, threats, and solutions for the future.

### Where are the koalas?

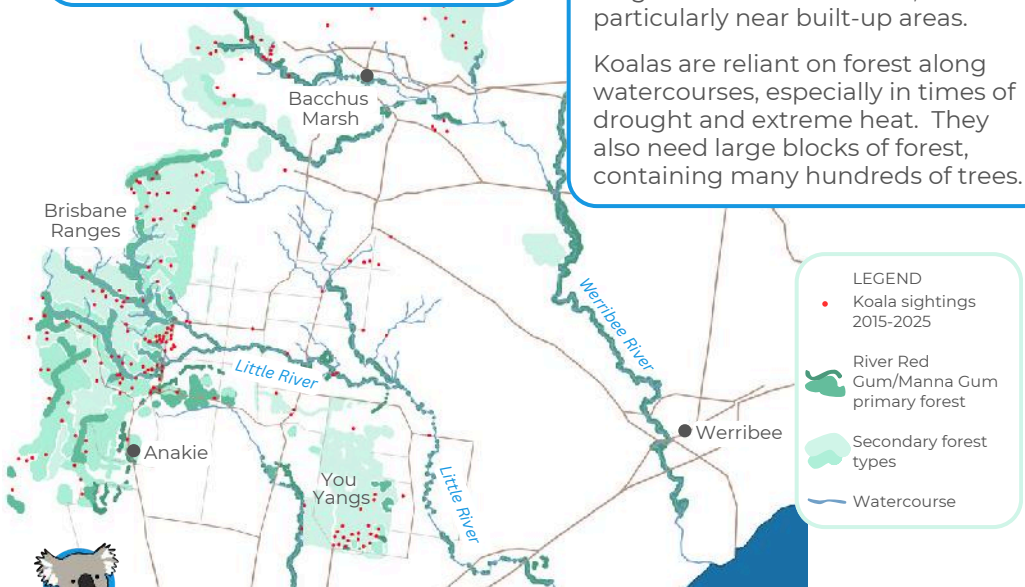
Wild koalas live in the Brisbane Ranges, You Yangs, and in the upper reaches of the Werribee River. These koala populations are fairly small and declining, but sightings are still possible. Few koalas live near or move along smaller waterways in the district, including the Little River, Balliang, Parwan, Hovells & Sandy Creeks.

### Why are koalas there?

Koala primary food trees in the district include Manna Gum *Eucalyptus viminalis* and River Red Gum *E. camaldulensis*. Other species of eucalyptus may be eaten, and are important as secondary forage and shelter.

Some forests that contain Manna and/or River Red Gum are no longer habitable for koalas, particularly near built-up areas.

Koalas are reliant on forest along watercourses, especially in times of drought and extreme heat. They also need large blocks of forest, containing many hundreds of trees.



This fact sheet was produced by Koala Clancy Foundation as a Melbourne Water Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways Project.



## Populations & status

CSIRO National Koala Monitoring Program estimates Victoria's koalas are in decline. Locally, recent research in Moorabool Shire found very little evidence of koalas, monitoring in the You Yangs has shown drastic declines, and local knowledge in the Brisbane Ranges supports this.

Under a hotter and drier climate, Koala populations in this region are predicted to shrink and move south and east - towards the Otways, and to the forests east of Melbourne.

## Do koalas travel far?

Koalas move around their home ranges through the year. Most koalas change trees every day, and can use up to 7 trees each night. Home ranges in the district vary from 5 to 45 hectares.

Koalas may leave their home area to travel to another location for many reasons. Dispersing koalas can travel many kilometres. Most dispersing koalas are young males, but koalas of all ages and sexes can disperse.

## Threats & solutions

**Habitat deterioration:** Leaf nutrition is reducing due to increased carbon in the atmosphere. Leaves are drying out, trees are dying & losing condition. Fragmentation of habitat lowers koala fitness and shortens their lives. Revegetation can reconnect forests.

**Road network:** High speed roads with heavy traffic loads kill koalas. Over- and under-passes may be needed.

**Built-up town areas:** Koalas avoid areas with high noise, traffic and domestic dogs. Planting on farmland is ideal and safe.

**Treeless areas:** Large treeless areas are risky for koalas. Dogs, cattle & horses can kill koalas on the ground. Fencing-off shelterbelts, waterways and paddock trees improve their chances of survival.

**Fires:** High intensity fires in koala habitat can kill 70% to 100% of koalas, but healthy populations can re-colonise if nearby.

**Disease:** Chlamydia is present in the area, though Victorian koalas usually have milder signs. Environmental stress may lead to more severe disease. Planting reduces stress.

## More information



[koalacancyfoundation.org.au](http://koalacancyfoundation.org.au)



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