



**Australian
Koala
Foundation**

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Saving the Koala starts locally: Australian Koala Foundation calls on Gwydir Shire community to attend landmark Warialda Workshop

Armed with a first-of-its-kind strategy to protect Australia's iconic tree-dwelling marsupial until 2075, Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) is hosting a historic free workshop in Warialda on February 14-15 to discuss the nation's first 'Koala Kiss Site' and Human Plan of Management.

AKF invites community members, landowners and other key stakeholders to attend the two-day workshop and learn what must be done to ensure the iconic Koala can thrive in the region for the next 50 years and beyond.

"Gwydir Shire has been chosen as the first 'Koala Kiss Site' due to its rare secure habitat that has the ability to have certain points of the landscape connected," AKF Chair Deborah Tabart OAM said.

"We're so excited for the Warialda Workshop as the region is integral to the beloved Koala's long-term survival," Ms Tabart said.

"I look forward to meeting people from all walks of the community to discuss how everyone can play a part in safeguarding this beautiful creature and implementing the first Human Plan of Management."

Day one of the workshop will include a field trip to some of the Gwydir Shire's most picturesque landscapes like the quaint village of Delungra, Cranky Rock Nature Reserve, Warialda Koala Wildlife Reserve and Koorilgur Nature Walk.

The second day will take place at Warialda Soldiers' Memorial Hall, featuring Q&A panel sessions and an open discussion about AKF's grand vision for the Gwydir Shire and Australia-wide Koala recovery.

Central to the workshop will be AKF's 'Koala Kiss Project', which aims to link fragmented habitats and identify strategic and/or regrowth opportunities.

The ultimate goal is to establish the 'Koala Kamino' - approximately 2,543kms of prime Koala habitat from Cairns to Melbourne that could form an uninterrupted conservation corridor by connecting key 'kiss points'.

This is possible with the use of AKF's scientific Koala Habitat Atlas, which maps the entire geographic habitat of the Koala across 1.5 million square kilometres.

Rather than a standard Koala Plan of Management, AKF will demonstrate in the Gwydir Shire how a Human Plan of Management can create sustainable communities in the face of environmental and human threats.

By doing so, Koala numbers are expected to grow over the next half-century - a significant feat given the animal is officially endangered in some states.

Australian Koala Foundation

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“About 80% of Australia’s Koalas live on private land, so it’s clear that we must manage human development and become stewards of the biodiversity that is on our properties,” added Ms Tabart, also known as the *Koala Woman*.

“Put simply, the Human Plan of Management relies on all of us doing the right thing, using common sense and prioritising the environment.

“If we do, Koalas will be abundant - and it starts with the Warialda Workshop.

“AKF is grounding itself in the Gwydir Shire, with a new Save the Koala shop set up in Warialda and plans to move our warehouse for the online Save the Koala shop to the region as well.

“As such, we’re excitedly looking for three new staff members: a Retail Shop Manager, a Warehouse Manager and a Koala Kiss Ranger.

“More context for the last role will be provided at the Warialda Workshop.”

Register your interest for the free Warialda Workshop on February 14 and 15 at savethekoala.com/our-work/warialda-workshop/

To find out more about AKF’s new vision for the Koala visit savethekoala.com/our-work/kiss

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