

Koala Drinkers Funding Report

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Project Title: Provision of 6 'Koala Drinkers' on stands with 200 litre tanks and labour and vehicles costs to support installing drinkers in the Armidale area

Introduction

In 2019 Armidale Regional Council wrote to the Minister for Energy and the Environment regarding the urgent need to construct and install six (6) 'koala drinkers' in targeted sites in the Armidale area to support local koalas in this time of severe drought. The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (the Department) (DPIE) agreed to provide an amount of \$11,000 ex GST (the funding) to Armidale Regional Council for the provision of 6 'koala drinkers' on stands with 200 litre tanks and labour and vehicle costs to support installing drinkers in the Armidale area.

The Department were then working with a number of stakeholder partners, including Armidale Regional Council, on koala projects in the Northern Tablelands area with funding under the Saving our Species (SoS) program. The Department acknowledged the need to provide for a number of 'koala drinkers' in targeted areas that could support local landholders in providing water sources for koalas over the coming summer period. It was understood that council would work with the Armidale Tree Group and local koala experts in the provision of these drinkers at priority sites.

The activities to be undertaken under the funding were:

Construction and installing and maintenance of 6 'koala drinkers' in targeted locations in the Armidale local government area.

The outputs sought from the project were:

- Construction of 6 koala drinkers;
- Installation and establishment of 6 drinkers at priority sites;
- Brief report after establishment of drinkers on location and observed usage.

This report provides the above information to satisfy the requirements of the Department.

Project Outputs

Overview

With the funding available, Armidale Regional Council were able to purchase , eight (8) 'Koala drinkers' from Turners Steel in Warialda due to council workers being able to pick the drinkers up and freight costs quoted therefore being absorbed. The 8 'Koala drinkers' were installed in targeted known Koala habitat areas, and also areas affected by summer bushfires, on the 21st December 2019. Installation was undertaken by Southern New England Landcare volunteers, under the direction of local ecologists who have been working on koala projects in conjunction with DPIE. Wildlife cameras were also installed on four of the 'koala drinkers' to determine what came to the 'koala drinkers' and how often they were used.

"Koala drinkers' were installed at Tillbuster (Killens, Travelling Stock Route) (TSR), Sunnyside Road, Newholme at the base of Mt Duval, Black Mountain Cemetery, Waldorf School, Rockdale Road and one at the Armidale Regional Council lobby area. The photos provided below shows the volunteers installing the 'koala drinkers', Photos 1 – 3 below.

The location of the eight 'koala drinkers' is provided in detail below. Of interest the project became known as the "Blinky drinker" project.

Armidale Tree Group undertook two maintenance trips checking drinkers at Tillbuster (Killens Travelling Stock Route (TSR)), Sunnyside Road, Newholme at the base of Mt Duval, and Black Mountain Cemetery. Of interest they used 200L of water to top up drinkers on the first trip, but did not need to top up drinkers on the second trip due to rainfall in the district, however they did check floats, joins etc. Ongoing rain in the district has meant that at present it is thought that the 'koala drinkers' are not being used and as such may be put in storage until next summer, for protection and to prevent the possibility of any damage occurring to them.



Photo 1. SNEL members installing a Koala drinker, with the tank next to tree. Photo, Kerry Watson.



Photo 2. Note fork in tree above tank, installation of further 'Koala drinker', SNEL volunteers, photo Kerry Watson.

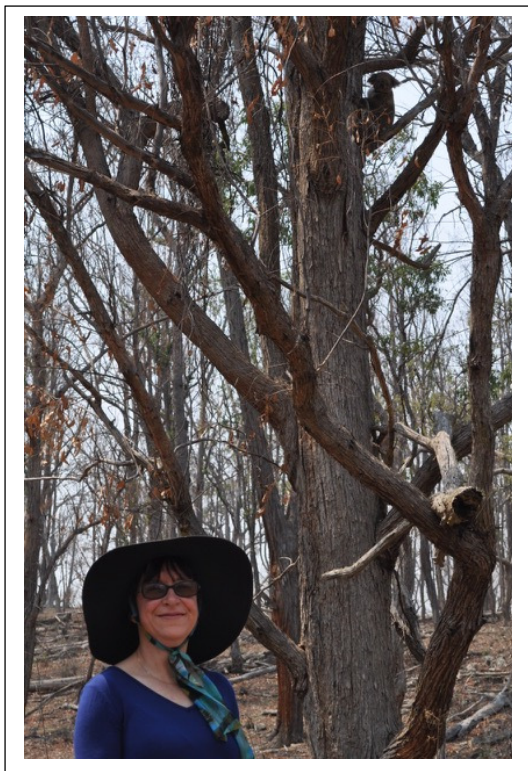


Photo 3. Koala in tree near where Koala drinker installed, SNEL volunteer, photo Davie Carr.

Location of 'Koala Drinkers'

The 'koala drinkers' were installed at the following locations and are shown diagrammatically in Figure 1:

- Black Mountain Cemetery
- Sunnyside Road;
- Tilbuster (Killens TSR);
- Newholme at foot of Mt Duval (three installed on this large property in different locations);
- Waldorf School, Rockvale Road; and
- Armidale Regional Council foyer.

The eighth 'koala drinker' was installed in the lobby of the Armidale Regional Council buildings in Armidale for information and potential ongoing support for the project amongst landholders and members of the general public.

Please also note that two additional 'koala drinkers' were purchased by Armidale Regional Council Parks and Gardens department and installed in the Armidale Cemetery and on Norris Walkway. Note that these locations have not been included in the map provided, Figure 1. These 'koala drinkers' were purchased through Armidale Regional Council's own budget process.

Observed usage

Remote sensing cameras were installed at four of the 'koala drinkers' by Southern New England Landcare volunteers, however to date no images have been obtained due to them being unable to collect and process images because of COVID restrictions, (David Carr, personal comments). However they have observed koala scats at two of the drinkers and it also looks like birds have been using them to. Once any images from these cameras have been downloaded they will be requested to be sent onto John Turbill, DPIE.

