

Moreton News

## Koala sightings plunge in Pine Rivers increasing fears for the iconic species

- by: Reshni Ratnam, Pine Rivers Press
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Joanne from Pine Rivers Koala Care Association prepares to release Minty and Violet at a property in Whiteside.

Source: Quest Newspapers

**Koala sightings have dropped in this region over the past three months, according to the Pine Rivers Koala Care Association increasing fears for the iconic species.**

The alarm has been raised by figures gathered by the Moggill Koala Hospital which over time show a drop in sightings and calls.

While development, roads and dogs are a major threat, disease claims most koalas.

"There's usually a lot of activity with koalas looking for new areas because of development but mostly it's the disease," Pine Rivers Koala Care Association member David Horstman said.

"We see quite a bit of activity in the Brendale and Strathpine areas, and Rothwell (Anzac Ave) where koalas try and cross from east to west."

Mr Horstman, of Cashmere, said staff from Osprey House Environmental Centre on Dohles Rocks Rd, in Griffin, had not seen a koala for months.

This comes as scientists at the Queensland University of Technology are working on a vaccine to fight diseases such as chlamydia.



Two orphaned koalas are being released back into the wild in Whiteside. One was hit by a car and another one was found sick. Pictured, Gary from Pine Rivers Koala Care Association releasing Violet.

Source: Quest Newspapers

Last week researches found the IFN-g gene was the key to finding a cure for Chlamydia and Koala Retrovirus, currently threatening the species.

It was welcome news. In January, Pine Rivers Koala Care Association received 86 calls from the public. Twenty-two koalas had Chlamydia, five had been hit by a car, one was attacked by a dog, there were 39 sightings and 11 were under threat.

The association was notified about eight other koalas which had other issues.

In February the group received 93 calls. Eleven koalas were diseased, five hit by a car, two orphaned, three other cases and 72 sightings.

Mr Horstman said while local residents were more aware of koalas and their safety it was important to notify the association about sick or injured koalas - phone 0401350799 (24-7).