

14th July 2020

High Country Herald

N.B. The koala the story was about was not ever on the road at the Tavern, in fact it was in bushland safely near the Highfields Hub on Highfields Road. Koala image in article is of "Dusty" a koala in care with another carer, not Toowoomba Koala and Wildlife Rescue.

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## Furry local makes a scene at the Tavern

QUINN MACDONALD REPORTING

Toowoomba Koala and Wildlife Rescue released a warning last week to all motorists after a male koala was spotted near the Highfields Tavern.

Koala rescuers and Highfields locals, Judi and Brendon Gray have been helping these furry critters since 2006.

"I am one of the many koala rescuers in the region," Mrs Gray said.

"We moved from Toowoomba to the Highfields region in 2004, and that led to an interest in the koalas."

Mrs Gray is one of the few people in the region with a koala rehabilitation licence and has dedicated her time to help the endangered species.

"Toowoomba Koala and Wildlife Rescue operates very closely with wildlife carers, local vets and the RSPCA," she said.

"It's sort of like a big network to help each other out and share our information."

Mrs Gray said the group had a variety of cases brought to them each year with illness being the most common problem they found.

"Koalas are prone to a variety of illnesses which includes chlamydia, conjunctivitis and cancer. Illness is also a lot more prevalent throughout times of drought," she said.

"When a koala suffering from any sort of illness is brought to us, we transport them to one of the specialised facilities throughout Queensland.

"However, we also receive a large number of koalas suffering from dog attacks and car trauma, which are probably the most easily preventable."

Mrs Gray said that koalas suf-

fering from car trauma generally don't survive as they are such a small animal.

"If they can be saved, we do everything we can to save them. If the koala's injuries don't allow them to be released back into the wild, they sometimes have to be put down," she said.

"Sometimes they are put into a zoo system for advance rehabilitation and breeding programs, but very rarely."

Last week, the group was alerted by a member of the public that a koala was spotted near the Highfields Tavern and that he may be in danger of being hit by a car.

"The male koala in question was in an extremely healthy condition and thankfully there are some food sources for him in the area," Mrs Gray said.

"As we work under the Queensland Government, we aren't allowed by law to move a koala that is not in immediate danger.

"So we asked that motorists stay aware of wildlife on the roads."

Every day koalas lose more and more of their environment. Mrs Gray believes that koalas simply aren't going to be around in the future.

"The koala itself is protected, but its environment isn't.

"There is no environment for them any more as eucalypts are removed from urban areas," she said.

"In saying that, we have many people who are trying to provide safe havens for these animals to live in."

Mrs Gray said things to be mindful of were dogs in the yard at night as koalas climb all sorts



Dusty, the baby koala at Toowoomba Koala and Wildlife Rescue.

of fences to get to trees.

"If you do have a koala call us or another expert to come check on it, as it's the best thing you can do for its safety," she said.

"Koalas are just trying to survive. They don't understand the dangers of the urban world."

If you have koala in need of help, phone Mrs Gray 0458 155 177.

