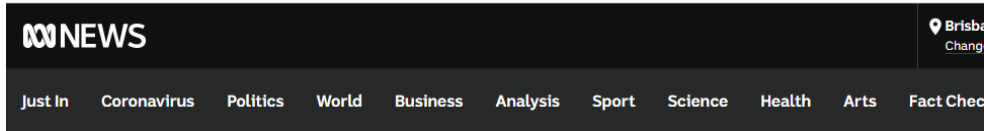


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ABC SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

Journalist - David Chen



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Nine-year-old koala rescued from Oakey army base treated for severe conjunctivitis

ABC Southern Qld / By David Chen

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Lawrence the koala looks at Captain Lawrence Griffiths at the Oakey Army Base. (Supplied: Judith Gray)

He is bigger and older than most koalas on the Darling Downs and now, Lawrence the koala has a clean bill of health, after befriending an army captain.

The nine-year-old koala was found at the Oakey Army Aviation Base suffering from conjunctivitis, which can lead to blindness in koalas.

"His eyes did look pretty bad when he was found," Toowoomba Koala and Wildlife Rescue's Judith Gray said.

"But he wasn't blind underneath and he could be completely treated."

Ms Gray said Lawrence was treated by the RSPCA at its facilities in Wacol and Eumundi, with staff describing him as a "total sweetheart".

Key points:

- Koala 'Lawrence' was rescued from the Oakey Army Aviation base in May
- The nine-year-old koala had been suffering from conjunctivitis, which can often lead to blindness
- Koala rescuers on the Darling Downs have been kept busy due to the drought



Koala 'Lawrence' was treated for conjunctivitis by the RSPCA. (Supplied: Judith Gray)

"They have all said he was a gentle giant," she said.

Ms Gray said he was a "whopping" koala, weighing in at nine kilograms.

"He was pretty big because our koalas here in Queensland are a lot smaller than the ones that you often see in the zoos or that come from down south — the southern koalas are quite a larger species," she said.

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Special moment

Named after his rescuer, Australian Army Captain Lawrence Griffiths, the koala was released into bushland near Oakey.

Ms Gray said it had been a special event for Captain Griffiths.

"He was really keen to see how the koala got on and be a part of it is recovery," she said.

"So it was only fitting that he was there for the release."

Ms Gray said that the army base provided a safe haven for animals like Lawrence.

"The army base is actually a really great place for the koalas to live because it's some pretty much predator-proof," she said.

"They also have special sort of escape fencing that they have actually built for the koalas, so the koalas aren't going to be stuck in there as such.

"The base itself planted, some time ago, a very large number of koala feed trees which are all in excellent condition, so yeah, it made it the perfect place for him to return to."

Ms Gray said due to ongoing drought, animal rescuers were still dealing with many koala rescues.

"Pretty much in really dry areas that just haven't really responded from that rain that we had in February," she said.

"I think a lot of koalas that have come in, that are in poor conditions, had already been suffering for a long time."



Captain Lawrence Griffiths spotted the koala during a run at the Oakey Army Aviation Base in May. (Supplied: Judith Gray)



Koala 'Lawrence' after recovering from conjunctivitis. (*Supplied: Judith Gray*)

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