



Anthony Roberts
Minister for Corrections
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MEDIA RELEASE

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INMATES TURN A NEW LEAF AND GAIN ‘KOALA-FICATIONS’

Inmates at a NSW prison are regenerating bushland and planting a eucalyptus forest to ensure a future food supply for koalas being cared for at animal sanctuaries across Australia.

The group of around 15 minimum-security inmates from the Mid North Coast Correctional Centre at Kempsey will plant an estimated 6,000 seedlings to cover an on-site area the size of 25 football fields.

Corrective Services Industries overseer Adam Moffitt has been managing the project as inmates remove weeds and prepare the soil for the seedlings, which will create a bush corridor for koalas, sugar gliders and native birds.

“We’re planting a variety of trees for koala fodder, such as *eucalyptus microcorys*, *eucalyptus tereticornis*, *eucalyptus saligna* and most importantly *eucalyptus nicholli*, which is one of their favourites and also helps speed up their recovery,” Mr Moffitt said.

“Our aim is to plant at least 1,000 seedlings each year over the next six years, or about 20 seedlings a week, which will eventually cover an area of 14 hectares.

“The inmates involved not only gain a connection to the land but learn skills in horticulture, which can assist them in gaining employment when they’re released from prison.”

Minister for Corrections Anthony Roberts praised staff for the initiative.

“This is a terrific long-term program to ensure a future supply of food for our beloved koalas, which I’m sure everyone would support,” Mr Roberts said.

Port Macquarie Koala Hospital donated the seedlings and Habitat Coordinator Steve Withnall said the collaboration couldn’t have come at a better time.

“In what is a national tragedy, the bushfires in and around Port Macquarie this month devastated a genetically diverse koala population,” Mr Withnall said.

“As many as 350 koalas have perished with approximately 75 per cent of the fire ground footprint being prime koala habitat.

“By planting eucalyptus seedlings we’re able to ensure a healthy supply of food for koalas, not just in NSW but all across Australia.”

Seedlings have also been donated by the Forestry Corporation of NSW, Kempsey Shire Council, Landcare and Billabong Zoo.

To learn more about the Koala Hospital and how you can assist, visit: koalahospital.org.au/