



HELLO KOALAS SCULPTURE PROJECT 2012 - 2015

A SIGNATURE CULTURAL EVENT

PORT MACQUARIE HASTINGS REGION, NSW

Project Manager: Arts and Health Australia

Principal Sponsor: Port Macquarie Hastings Council

Supporters: Arts Mid North Coast, Accessible Arts NSW, Focus Magazine, Port News, Koala Hospital, Greater Port Macquarie Tourism Association, Port Macquarie Chamber of Commerce

Port Macquarie Hastings Council is partnering with locally based national organization, Arts and Health Australia, to establish a **signature cultural event** for the region - **Hello Koalas** - to complement the existing signature sporting and lifestyle events.

The Hello Koalas project recognizes the innovative power that fun, creative and sometimes quirky activities and events can have in fostering the socio-economic fabric of our local community.

Key objectives are cultural tourism, economic development and community engagement and participation.

The **Hello Koalas** project is based on the creation of **50 large-scale sculptures**, manufactured in fibreglass and hand painted by celebrity artists, professional artists and community groups.

A variety of businesses, government bodies and community organizations will be invited to join the Partnership Program and sponsor one or more of the koala sculptures, which will be installed in prominent, interesting and surprising locations within the Port Macquarie Hastings Council boundaries to form a **Koala Sculpture Trail**. As part of the project, **200,000 trail maps**, supported by a downloadable online pdf version and a mobile phone app, will be circulated when the project is unveiled in September 2014.

The **Hello Koalas signature cultural event** is designed to:

- deliver a signature cultural event for Port Macquarie Hastings and build on public art policy.
- position Port Macquarie Hastings as the arts and cultural capital of regional NSW.
- showcase the region's natural and cultural diversity by placing the sculptures in accessible yet interesting locations.
- increase visitation (numbers, length of stay, expenditure) in the domestic, national and international markets by enhancing visitor destination appeal and showcasing the destination as having so much more to offer than just beautiful beaches.
- encourage exploration of the region by local residents, leading them to areas they have not visited.
- bring to life the potential for a broad range of artistic expression and integrate it into the regional and State's marketing, and promotional activities to attract new visitors, and new business.
- excite strong media attention locally, nationally and internationally .
- engender civic pride and foster a healthy and connected community through engagement in public art.
- foster economic development by portraying Port Macquarie Hastings as an area that has abundant natural attractions, is environmentally attuned and offers a vibrant and cosmopolitan lifestyle – a fun and interesting place to live, work, visit.
- raise awareness of the importance of koala care and conservation and highlight the significant work of the Koala Hospital in Port Macquarie.

HELLOKOALAS
www.hellokoalas.com

52 Shoreline Drive Port Macquarie NSW 2444
Mobile: 0416 641 482 Telephone: 02 6587 4292 Email: info@hellokoalas.com

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The Koala is an iconic Australian animal, found primarily along the east coast. Port Macquarie has a number of koala corridors linking to specific habitats and is home to the highly respected Koala Hospital and Study Centre, operating in association with Sydney University. The Koala Hospital has donors from around the world.

The **Hello Koalas public sculpture project will have broad appeal and magnetic draw** for people of all ages, from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Locals, holiday makers, international tourists, bus trippers, business travellers, backpackers, travel groups, families, grey nomads, retirees, school groups, nature lovers and farmstay visitors will want to follow the **Official Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail** and have their photographs taken with one or more of the 50 creatively painted sculptures.

The fabrication of the sculptures is designed to cope with weathering and handling by the public. Research has shown that vandalism is not a major issue where public sculptures are seen as valuable assets of a local community and there is a strong level of community ownership in the project.

Hello Koalas has been inspired by the Larkin with Toads sculpture project in Hull, UK in 2010, featuring 40 large scale painted toads, which attracted 120,000 people to the Toads Sculpture Trail over just a 10 week period.

The **Official Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail of 50 creatively decorated koalas will be in place until 2015!** There will also be an **educational program** for schools and tertiary institutions managed by Arts and Health Australia.

A high socio-economic return on investment in the region is predicted, based on the comprehensive evaluation of the experience. Results from the Toads project included:

- Hull Tourist Information Centre reported a 40% increase in footfall for July and August 2010, compared to figures for the same two months in 2009.
- 83% of cafes, restaurants and sandwich shops sited near a Toad sculpture, reported an increase in customer numbers.
- Many people made return trips to the city to complete the Toads trail.
- Independent research showed that Larkin with Toads brought an economic boost to the area of 1 million pounds in additional revenue over 10 weeks.
- The Larkin with Toads project won several prominent tourism awards including the Silver Award in the 2012 VisitEngland Best Tourism Event of the Year Excellence in Tourism Awards.
- 90% of people surveyed said they would like Hull to implement further public art projects, saying that they liked the 'child-friendly, colourful and animal theme'.

PLUS: Improved health and wellbeing as people are encouraged to explore the Hello Koalas sculpture trail and enjoy being out and about, taking time for leisure, breathing in fresh air and delighting in the beautiful surrounds. **Hello Koalas supports the '5 Ways To Wellbeing': Connect - Keep Learning - Be Curious - Stay Active - Give** (www.neweconomics.org)

For more information about the Hello Koalas public art project and the Partnership Program, please contact Margret Meagher, Hello Koalas Project Manager, Telephone 0416 641 482 or email margret@hellokoalas.com Linda Hall, Hello Koalas Project Adviser, Telephone 0428 975 650 or email linda@hellokoalas.com

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