



## Hello Koalas INSPIRES

The Hello Koalas Sculpture Project has received over 150 artist design submissions. **The challenging task now is selecting just 50 for the large scale one-metre high fibreglass koala sculptures that will form The Official Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail from September 2014.** Port Macquarie Hastings Council is the principal sponsor.

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"Hello Koalas has inspired people on a regional, national and international scale," says Project Manager Linda Hall. "The design ideas, while very diverse, have one theme in common – every artist loves and respects the Koala!"

Community Champions are being invited to sponsor one of the fifty koala sculptures and support this significant community and cultural tourism project. Thirty-three sponsors are already in place, including Billabong Zoo, Charles Sturt University, Primary Healthcare, Panthers, Rydges Port Macquarie, Southern Cross Austereo, Ascot Park, Emerald Downs Golf Course, Sails Resort by Rydges, Ricardoes Tomatoes and Strawberries, Port Macquarie News, Little Brewing Company, Focus Magazine, Sea Acres Rainforest Centre, Observatory Hotel, Carbon Reduction Institute, World Par-Tea and The Corner Restaurant at Macquarie Waters.

A happy meeting at the launch of the Hello Koalas project in December has led Community Champion Forestry Corporation of NSW to invite local artist Pauline Roods to paint a local forest theme and tie in with a future school education program.

Bago Vineyards has chosen to keep the job of designing and painting their sponsored koala sculpture in the family by engaging their talented daughter, Kellie Mobbs. Kellie, an accomplished

textile print designer in her own right, says: "My Amaze-ing Koala' design is a reflection of the bush magic experienced at Bago Maze/ Vineyards. It encompasses the spirit of the native bush scape and lilly pilly maze surrounded with seasonal grapes. The artwork features the native bottlebrush, kangaroo paw with splashes of wattles and gum leaves through a subtle breeze amongst the spirals of the Bago Maze. The design is a positive statement on the Australian Bush and native wildlife preservation."

Community Champions, Brett and Jacqui Jones from McDonalds Port Macquarie have elected to go with a surf rescue theme. They are proud supporters of the Port Macquarie Surf Life Saving Club and see their sponsorship of a Lifesaver sculpture design as further supporting and profiling two Aussie icons – the lifesaver and the koala!

Port Macquarie resident, Suzi Fischer submitted a design for an Ironman Koala. Suzi says: "It represents those athletes who dedicate themselves to training for the Australian Ironman Triathlon, held every year in Port Macquarie. I founded Balmoral Triathlon Club (back in 1989, when I lived in Sydney) and have wonderful memories of my triathlon days. I moved to Port Macquarie three years ago and look forward to Ironman every year when I cheer on my old friends from Balmoral and my new friends from Port Macquarie".

Cassegrain Wines will be giving their sponsored koala a genuine French theme when the sculpture is sent to Paris next month to be painted by Australian artist, Sophie Corcoran, who is living and working in Paris and enjoying the inspiration and creative energy of this great city. Sophie is looking forward to decorating this 100% Australian made fibreglass sculpture with

a wonderful Parisian scene before it joins the Sculpture Trail at the winery.

Another sculpture is heading to the USA, although it won't be returning! Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, host of the Global Alliance for Arts and Health annual international arts and health conference in April 2014, has purchased a koala sculpture for its permanent art collection. In a collaborative art making initiative, the 450 delegates will contribute their fingerprint to an overall design of fingerprints on the koala sculpture. The fingerprints will celebrate each person's distinctive sense of identity and place within the global arts and health community and create a permanent record of the 25th anniversary conference.

This design concept also draws on the fact that the koala is only one of two animals with an individual fingerprint and reinforces the importance of koala conservation to preserve the species.

Another recent coup for the Hello Koalas Project was the announcement that the NSW Premier, Barry O'Farrell has agreed to sponsor a koala sculpture. It will

feature an artist's design that aims to raise awareness of the State Government's pilot scheme to establish

the Port Macquarie Hastings region as the first dementia friendly community in New South Wales.

Margret said: "When I became aware that local Member of Parliament for Port Macquarie Leslie Williams was committed to making our region more accessible for people with dementia, the idea of creating a design to promote dementia awareness for one of our koalas took shape.

A phone call to Melbourne artist Kerry Smith-Taughkin, who connects people with Alzheimer's and school children through art, commenced the creative process and now we have Kerry's beautiful design for one of our 50 koala sculptures. Hopefully, it will help demystify the perceptions that people have around dementia."

The Hello Koalas project team is now showing Community Champions the first round of successful submissions to match sponsors with artists. According to Linda Hall, an outstanding submission is the twin koala designs submitted by mosaic artists, Franchesca O'Donnell and Vic Compton from Beechwood. The two designs – Kalido and PK Performing Koala – are a celebration of the arts in the Port Macquarie Hastings Community. "We would like to see this pair of unique mosaic sculptures located in the Forecourt next to the Glasshouse. They are destined to become the "jewels in the crown" along the Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail".

For more information about the Hello Koalas Sculpture Project, log on to [www.hellokoalas.com](http://www.hellokoalas.com), email [info@hellokoalas.com](mailto:info@hellokoalas.com) or call Linda Hall on 0428 975 650

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