

元記事	https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-09-10/koala-chlamydia-vaccine-approved-for-australia-wide-rollout/105747236
発信元	ABC NEWS
記事発信日	10 Sep 2025
執筆者	Janel Shorthouse and Jessica Ross

First koala chlamydia vaccine approved for rollout across Australia



This koala has played a role in the University of the Sunshine Coast's chlamydia vaccine study. (ABC Sunshine Coast: Janel Shorthouse)

In short:

Australia's vet regulator approves a koala chlamydia vaccine for nationwide rollout, offering new hope in the fight against the potentially fatal sexually transmitted disease.

Vets and conservation groups say the vaccine's rollout is vital to give struggling koala colonies a chance at survival.

What's next?

Researchers are calling for government funding to help deliver the vaccine to at-risk koala populations in Queensland and New South Wales by the end of 2026.

Koalas will soon have protection from a deadly sexually transmitted disease that has devastated wild populations, following the approval of a nationwide chlamydia vaccine rollout.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority has approved the single-dose vaccine, developed by the University of the Sunshine Coast (UniSC) after more than a decade of research.

The approval means the treatment can now be distributed nationally to protect one of the country's most vulnerable species, and is no longer limited to trial conditions.



The UniSC vaccine can be delivered in a single dose. (ABC Sunshine Coast: Janel Shorthouse)

UniSC and the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) have each developed separate vaccines, but the Sunshine Coast is the first to win approval.

The QUT trial vaccination requires two doses, while the UniSC vaccine works with one.

Vaccine needed urgently

Chlamydia is one of the leading threats to koalas, causing painful urinary tract infections, infertility, blindness and death.

UniSC professor of microbiology Peter Timms said the single-dose version made the vaccine practical for use in the wild.

"That's very important because with a koala, you're not going to get a chance to capture it twice."



Peter Timms is the koala research lead at the University of the Sunshine Coast. (ABC Sunshine Coast :Jessica Ross)

Koala populations in Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory were listed as endangered in 2022.

South-east Queensland's wild koala population has dropped to fewer than 16,000.

Professor Timms said vehicle strikes, animal attacks and the ongoing loss of habitat due to urban development also threatened the species.

He said the new vaccine was urgently needed.

"There are less koalas today than there was yesterday," Professor Timms said.

"We know if it is rolled out across populations, it can make a difference overall."

Chlamydia's toll

UniSC senior researcher Sam Phillips said the vaccine had shown strong results during the largest and longest-ever study of wild koalas conducted over the last three years.

"The vaccine reduced the likelihood of koalas developing symptoms of chlamydia during breeding age," Dr Phillips said.

"[It] also decreased mortality from the disease in wild populations by at least 65 per cent," he said.

The vaccine works by training the koala's immune system to recognise and fight chlamydia bacteria.

It can reduce the risk of infection, as well as stop the disease's progression and, in some cases, reverse symptoms.

Until now, antibiotics have been the only treatment.

However, they can disrupt digestion and be fatal, and still often fail to prevent reinfection.



Julien Grosmaire says the vaccine is another tool to help protect koalas. (ABC: Janel Shorthouse)

Endeavour Veterinary Ecology senior veterinarian Julien Grosmaire has treated many koalas suffering from the disease.

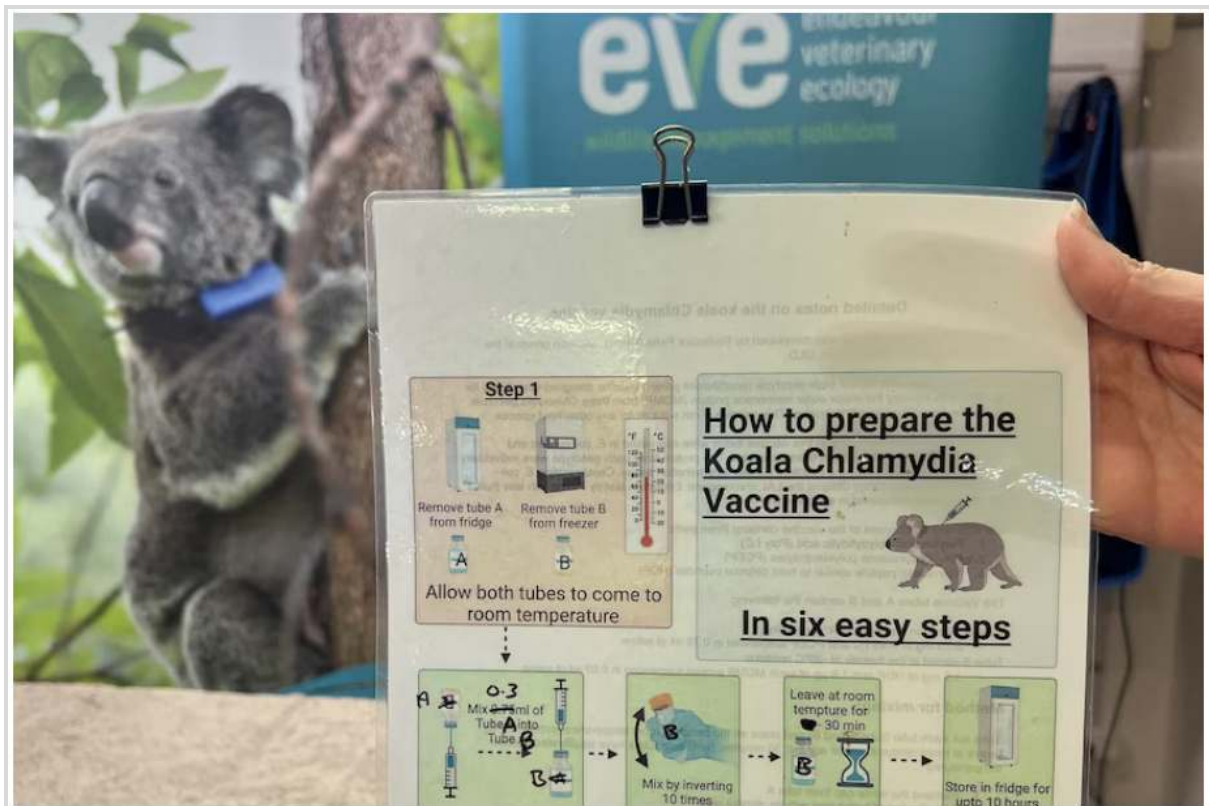
The specialist wildlife veterinary service where he works manages koala health programs and has been administering the vaccine as part of the university trials.

"Some koalas will come in blind from conjunctivitis, or very skinny from not being able to find food," Dr Grosmaire said.

"Sometimes with bladder infections, they've got scalded skin and ulcerated rumps from the urine burning their skin.

"It is quite traumatic to see koalas come in when they're so sick, and sometimes not be able to help."

Dr Grosmaire said chlamydia was the "nail in the coffin" for koalas already under pressure from habitat loss.



UniSC researchers say a single-dose vaccine is a practice option for wild koala populations. (ABC Sunshine Coast: Janel Shorthouse)

Queensland Conservation Council campaigner Nicky Moffat said the vaccine's approval was an exciting step, but raised questions about rollout and funding.

"A successful vaccine could be a game-changer for one of the most iconic and threatened mammals," Ms Moffat said.

"The big question now is whether it will be rolled out widely, be funded by governments ... and made affordable for under-resourced wildlife hospitals."

She said a rollout was "critical for wild populations already under pressure".



Nicky Moffat records sightings during a koala count in Yabba State Forest on the Sunshine Coast. (Photo supplied: Patrick Woods)

Call for government funding

Professor Timms said it was vital the vaccine reached at-risk populations quickly.

"We've seen at least one example of a population that was on the way down, and using the vaccine with other tools, you can turn them around," he said.

Researchers are calling for state and federal support for the rollout.

They hope to deliver the vaccine to at-risk koala populations in Queensland and New South Wales by the end of 2026.

"We need help to get the vaccine from research into reality," Professor Timms said.

State Member for Pumicestone Ariana Doolan said the Queensland government recently invested \$100,000 to help prepare the vaccine for registration.



Ariana Doolan says the state government has put money towards preparing the vaccine for registration. (ABC Sunshine Coast: Janel Shorthouse)

"It's such a milestone for koala conservation ... this is something that is going to preserve our Australian icon," Ms Doolan said.

She said the government had also committed nearly \$40 million over three years to expand wildlife hospitals across Queensland.