

The Royal Society of Queensland Research Fund

Several years ago, the Central Queensland Koala Volunteers expressed a desire to establish an ongoing Trust Fund to sponsor Central Queensland-related research into koalas and associated environmental subjects. The Volunteers chose the Royal Society as a partner in this venture, given the Society's long-standing history and its mandate to encourage and promote science. The Society welcomed this offer warmly as it is consistent with the Society's position as a learned society with an enduring life and offering a vehicle (the *Proceedings*) for publishing the findings of quality research. The Trust Fund allows the Society to offer a complete service to researchers, from funding their investigations, through mentoring, hosting events and publicity, to publication of completed research.

The Volunteers donated the first contributions totalling \$10,000 to the Fund to establish a basis for seeking donations. This was matched by the Society from its general account. The Australian Taxation Office granted tax deductibility, and the Fund was registered as a charity on 25 July 2014. The Fund was launched by Her Excellency the Governor of Queensland, Penelope Wensley AC, at a reception held at the Queensland Museum on 13 June 2014.

It was not until donations were received from philanthropists to push the capital fund beyond \$50,000 that applications were opened. As Trustee of the Fund, the Council of the Royal Society determined to commit \$5000 for each of three years to research grants. Some 50 people gathered at the Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation Science, University of Queensland, on 5 June 2018 when the inaugural round of applications was launched by late Life Member Emeritus Professor Trevor Clifford. The Treasurer of the Central Queensland Koala Volunteers, Miss Shirley Hopkins, flew from Rockhampton for the day.

Inaugural Grant Round 2018

Following assessment by a three-person panel of experienced scientists from institutions other than those of the applicants, the winners of the first two awards were announced formally at the 2018 Annual General Meeting by Life Member Emeritus

Professor Calvin Rose. The two awardees gave PowerPoint presentations (available on the RSQ website: <http://www.royalsocietyqld.org/research/>).

- Alex Jiang. Humble cow: a koala serial killer? An investigation of koala-cattle interactions.
- Chapa Gimhani Manwaduge. Conservation Biology of Threatened Native Olives (Genus *Notelaea*) in Southern Queensland.

Grant Round 2, 2019

Again, following independent assessment against the selection criteria, the applications judged most meritorious were both for work on the koala. The Australian Koala Foundation generously agreed to fund one of the highest-ranked applications, which enabled the Society to issue a second grant. The two candidates gave presentations immediately after the Annual General Meeting in November 2019.

- Dr Michaela Blyton. What Do Koalas Eat Where and Does This Shape Their Microbiomes?
- Dr Bonnie Quigley. Comparing Koala Retrovirus Infection between Central and South East Queensland Koalas.

Grant Round 3, 2020

Applications were invited for grants from the Research Fund, which closed at midnight on 28 November 2020, under fresh guidelines. The new 2020 Funding Policy encourages applications from citizen science groups. Further details can be viewed at <http://www.royalsocietyqld.org/research/>

Fund Details

To preserve the capital reserve, no further rounds will be launched unless donations can be received to augment the Fund. Donations can be lodged at any time into the trust account:

BSB 064-001, Account number 11970213. Deposits can be made at any branch of the Commonwealth Bank or online. The Australian Business Number for the Trust Fund is 33 120 792 616.