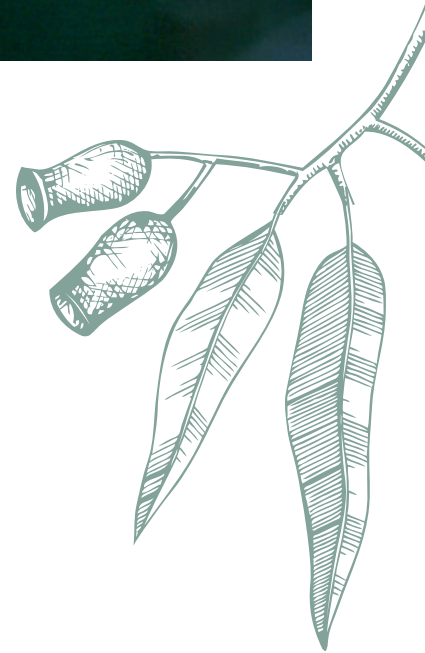




South East Queensland  
Koala Conservation Strategy  
2020–2025



Queensland  
Government

Prepared by: Department of Environment and Science

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June 2020 | #32066



## Minister's Foreword

Koalas are one of Australia's most iconic native species and in South East Queensland we are fortunate to have the highest concentration of koalas in the state.

The South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2020-2025 includes the strongest koala protections Queensland has ever seen, increasing both the area and level of protection given to koalas in the south east corner. Under new regulations introduced in February 2020, over 716,266 hectares is now mapped as koala habitat including 330,660 hectares within koala priority areas, where clearing of koala habitat areas is now prohibited.

Habitat loss, disease, car strikes, dog attacks and, as the devastating bushfires of 2019 showed, the impacts of climate change are some of the key threats facing koalas.

The Strategy, developed in partnership with First Nations peoples, wildlife and conservation groups, building and development industries, local councils, and the community, represents a collaborative and considered response to koala conservation over the next five years.

The Strategy outlines critical actions that are necessary to halt the decline in South East Queensland koala populations and preserve and restore key koala habitat, while working towards increasing koala populations over the long term.

We have already implemented a key action of the Strategy by amending the state planning framework to restrict the clearing of koala habitat areas.

The regulations are based on state-of-the-art mapping that uses the best science available to identify core koala habitat, delivering a more strategic and consistent approach to koala conservation across local government boundaries.

The Strategy also sets a target to reduce koala injury and mortality by 25% at key hotspots by 2025, building on the tremendous efforts of our wildlife hospitals, dedicated volunteer carers, and others already working to save our koalas.

I thank the many people and organisations who have contributed to the Strategy's development, and in particular, the Koala Advisory Council for their guidance and leadership.

Our goal is to secure South East Queensland's remaining stronghold of koala populations now and for future generations.

I am confident that together, through our partnerships, we can meet the challenge of saving one of our nation's most iconic and loved native species.

#### Leeanne Enoch

Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef  
Minister for Science  
Minister for the Arts

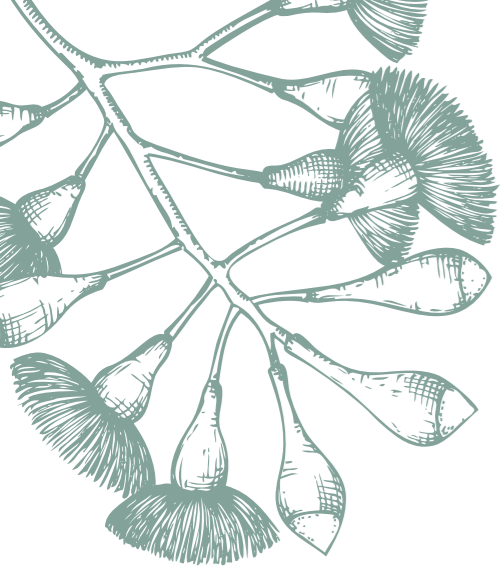




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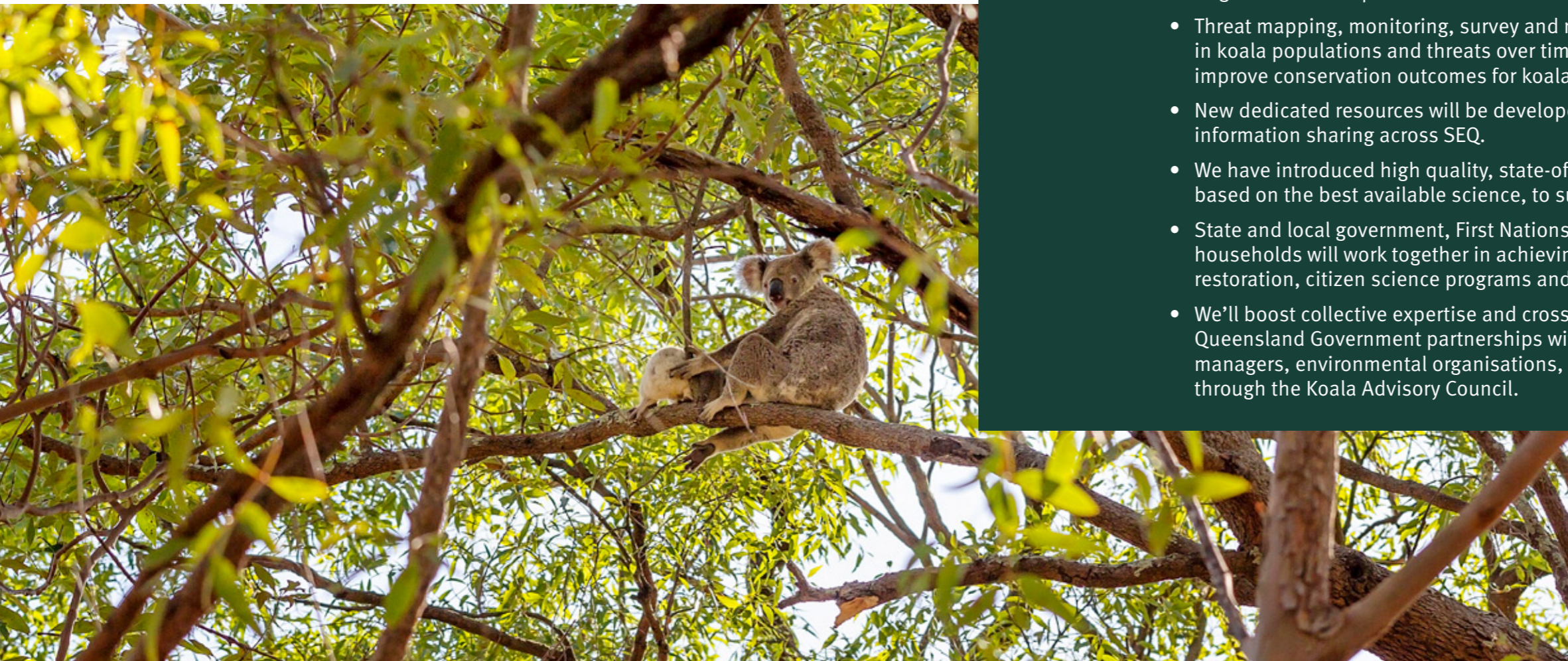
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## Koala conservation highlights

- We have introduced the strongest koala protections Queensland has ever seen. By amending the state planning framework, we have acted to restrict the clearing of koala habitat areas. New prohibitions prevent clearing of koala habitat areas within a koala priority area, unless the activity is allowed under a strict set of exemptions that ensure safety and appropriate land management.
- The Queensland Government is leading assessment involving clearing of koala habitat areas across South East Queensland (SEQ), with local government playing a vital role in providing for koala-safe development and compliance.
- We have established a \$1.96 million partnership with the Queensland Trust for Nature for habitat restoration, which will be further supported by the Queensland Government's Land Restoration Fund.
- We will partner with local government and non-government organisations to develop a targeted and transparent threat reduction program.
- Threat mapping, monitoring, survey and research programs will help measure changes in koala populations and threats over time, helping us to adapt management actions to improve conservation outcomes for koalas into the future.
- New dedicated resources will be developed to support koala carers and improve information sharing across SEQ.
- We have introduced high quality, state-of-the-art koala habitat mapping across SEQ based on the best available science, to support sustainable koala populations.
- State and local government, First Nations people, the conservation sector and households will work together in achieving priority koala conservation through habitat restoration, citizen science programs and threat mitigation.
- We'll boost collective expertise and cross-sector collaboration by strengthening Queensland Government partnerships with local government, natural resource managers, environmental organisations, researchers, wildlife care groups and others through the Koala Advisory Council.





# Koala conservation challenges in Queensland

“The koala is one of the world’s most iconic and well known species. Yet, koalas are increasingly threatened in Queensland primarily due to the loss of habitat and associated threats such as climate change.” (Koala Expert Panel 2017)

In Queensland, the greatest concentration of koalas is in South East Queensland (SEQ). The Queensland Government has been monitoring koalas in SEQ for more than 20 years and has amassed considerable data on their distribution, density and demographic parameters. Koalas were first listed as vulnerable in SEQ under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* in 2005, and in 2015 this was expanded to koalas across the entire state<sup>1</sup>.

Koalas face a range of environmental stresses including habitat loss, impacts from high intensity bushfires and climate change, disease, dog attacks and car strikes. Threats do not occur in isolation and koalas can be simultaneously affected by multiple threats.

The best habitat for koalas, with rich fertile soil for producing eucalyptus trees, are also the places where we prefer to live, work and grow food, placing koalas in competition with us for land. Almost three quarters (72 per cent) of remnant core koala habitat has been cleared in SEQ since 1960<sup>2</sup>.

The South East Queensland Koala Population Modelling Study revealed that, despite pre-existing koala habitat protection measures, the decline in peri-urban koala populations may have been accelerating. It highlighted an 80 per cent decline in koala population densities along the ‘Koala Coast’ (Wellington Point to the Logan River) and a 54 per cent decline in the Pine Rivers region between 1996 and 2014<sup>3</sup>.

The study concluded that the continuing decline was, in part, related to ongoing habitat loss in SEQ resulting from urbanisation, and that the current pattern of urban development was incompatible with viable koala populations<sup>4</sup>. During the same period, greater Brisbane’s population increased at a rate faster than any other capital city in Australia, growing by 40 per cent. Current projections indicate that the human population of SEQ will rise by a further two million people (bringing the population to 5.3 million) by 2041. This creates the need for more than 30,000 new homes each year across SEQ<sup>5</sup>.

1 Queensland’s *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (NC Act).

2 Spatial modelling for koalas in South East Queensland report v1.0. 2020. Biodiversity Assessment Team, Queensland Herbarium, Department of Environment and Science.

3 Rhodes, J.R., H. Beyer, H. Preece, and C. McAlpine. 2015. South East Queensland Koala Population Modelling Study. Uniquist, Brisbane, Australia.

4 Rhodes, J.R., H. Beyer, H. Preece, and C. McAlpine. 2015. South East Queensland Koala Population Modelling Study. Uniquist, Brisbane, Australia.

5 *ShapingSEQ* South East Queensland Regional Plan. 2017. The State of Queensland, Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning.



## Koala Expert Panel

In response to concern about the rapid decline of koalas in SEQ, despite existing protection measures, the Queensland Government appointed the Koala Expert Panel (KEP) to provide recommendations on the most appropriate and realistic actions to address the decline in, and ensure the future of, koala populations in the wild across SEQ.

The KEP, made up of experts in ecology, wildlife management, and planning and environment law, made six key recommendations with supporting actions:

- A strategic and coordinated approach to koala conservation
- Ensure koala habitat is protected
- Strategic and landscape-scale koala habitat restoration
- Coordinated threat reduction and koala population management
- Strong community partnerships and engagement
- Targeted mapping, monitoring, research and reporting.

The KEP noted that no single action alone would be successful in conserving koala populations, but that a multifaceted, coordinated approach across stakeholder groups and conservation initiatives was necessary to halt population decline.

The Queensland Government responded to the KEP report and committed to implementing all six recommendations. This Strategy outlines the Queensland Government’s actions in response to each recommendation.





## Cultural significance of koalas

The Queensland Government acknowledges the significance of koala populations and habitat to First Nations people, and their enduring stewardship of this iconic animal across Queensland.

First Nations people have told their stories during the formation of this Strategy and the government thanks those who have shared their histories. We acknowledge that these stories are sacred and that the protections of koalas is deeply embedded in the culture, language, spirituality and identity of First Nations people.

We also acknowledge Land and Sea Rangers in SEQ who work to protect koalas and their habitat, and who through their connection to country, weave a unique and valuable perspective to educate and inspire others to value and look after our local koala populations.

The Queensland Government will continue to seek out new stories and partnerships to co-design initiatives and practical strategies that respect traditions and reflect First Nations peoples' deep knowledge of country.

## A community perspective

The global response to the plight of koalas during the devastating 2019–20 bushfires, with millions of dollars donated to support their recovery and conservation, is testimony to their social, cultural and economic value.

The koala is a significant international tourism attraction for Australia. In SEQ, there are approximately 130,000 visitors to the Daisy Hill Koala Centre every year. Wildlife tourism, including for koalas, is a significant and growing contributor to the Australian tourism industry.

*Koalas capture the hearts and minds of Australians and visitors alike, which is why the koala—or “Borobi” in the Gold Coast traditional language, Yugambeh-Mibbuni—was the mascot for the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games. For traditional custodians the koala is a living being of culture, a physical symbol of spirituality.*

*The koala was once a food source in many areas, but more importantly, it is the habitat that koalas live in which has intrinsic significance for traditional owners. Habitat is everything, not just for food but also dreaming areas, songlines, stories and tales of connection, life and survival. Once the land is gone, the dreaming and songlines are gone. To preserve the land and all its inhabitants we need strong protections for their habitat and to ensure they can travel safely across the landscape and waterways.*

*Near Currumbin, place of the Hardwood Trees, the koalas follow the bush corridor down to the brackish water to drink. In doing so, they follow the same areas with middens and scar trees that have been used by traditional custodians for millennia. So, what the koala sees as important is the same as what traditional custodians see—everything in the landscape is important. Preservation is the key.*

*To respect culture you need to preserve the land where koala live and in that way you can keep culture alive. A culture not only for traditional custodians but all custodians, all Australians.*

**Clinton Brewer, Yugambeh Traditional Owner**





## What we heard

The Queensland Government released the *Draft South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2019–2024* (draft Strategy) for public consultation on 8 December 2019 and invited the community to have their say on the future direction of koala conservation in the region.

Almost 5000 Queenslanders shared their commitment to protecting this iconic species through:

- an online survey
- written submissions
- community drop-in sessions held at Aspley, Beenleigh, Bokarina, Currumbin, Daisy Hill Koala Centre, Ipswich and Morayfield
- targeted stakeholder workshops
- local government officer information sessions, with all 12 South East Queensland local councils.

The Koala Advisory Council (KAC) reviewed and provided advice on the draft Strategy. The KAC membership includes representation from a broad range of key stakeholder groups including Queensland Government departments, the Local Government Association of Queensland, non-government organisations, and industry.

The feedback received from the submissions, workshops and face-to-face engagements was analysed to ensure that the sentiment and concerns raised were captured and considered in this Strategy.

Queenslanders showed support for the Queensland Government leading collaborative efforts to conserve koala populations and highlighted the importance of mapping, monitoring and research in underpinning future action. Habitat protection was identified as critical to achieving the objectives, while habitat restoration, threat reduction and partnerships should form a supporting, integrated package. Respondents called for bolder targets and stronger action to address the challenges facing koalas.

The Queensland Government has listened to this feedback, and the *South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy* delivers upon Queenslanders desires for strategic and collaborative koala conservation partnerships across the region.



“The public narrative during the bushfire disaster has highlighted just how much everyday people want to save this iconic species”

“There is scope to reverse the severe decline in the SEQ koala population if all government and non-government agencies work together towards a common goal”

“The koala is quintessentially Australian. The species is endemic to our country, instantly recognisable, a huge tourism drawcard and culturally important for First Nations people”

“It is critical that we work together to recognise the importance and significance of protecting and conserving areas of critical koala habitat”





## Introduction

The *South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2020-2025* details the Queensland Government's direction in reversing the decline in koala populations across SEQ and, in doing so, safeguarding the future of this iconic species.

The Queensland Government cannot reverse the decline alone. A coordinated, collaborative approach to habitat protection, restoration and threat mitigation is imperative to achieving the targets and halting the decline in koala populations within the life of the Strategy, and growing populations in the long-term.

Federal, State and local government, landholders, koala carers, First Nations people, including Traditional Owners, ecologists and the community all have a role to play.

By providing leadership and working with partners to leverage and maximise collective actions, the Queensland Government will focus efforts on areas where there is the highest likelihood of success and establish the foundations for recovery and growth of koala populations into the future.

While the need for urgent action is clear, reversing the decline in koala populations will not happen immediately and will require consistent and concerted effort by the Queensland Government, its partners and the broader community over many years.

This Strategy establishes a vision for koalas in SEQ that underpins our actions in the short, medium and longer-term, and identifies the actions that will immediately start to stabilise koala populations in the region.

This Strategy is built around six key Action Areas:

1. Habitat protection
2. Habitat restoration
3. Threat management
4. Improved mapping, monitoring, research and reporting
5. Community engagement
6. Partnerships and strategic coordination

These Action Areas respond to the key recommendations and objectives of the *Queensland Koala Expert Panel: A new direction for the conservation of koalas in Queensland*.



*Queenslanders and visitors alike, all want to ensure healthy koala populations in the wild, for the long term. The South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy provides the framework for us to all work together—across the Koala Advisory Council, government, industry, researchers, carers, community groups and conservationists—to realise that vision, and not just maintain populations, but grow them into the future.*

**Mr Mark Townend, former CEO, RSPCA  
(Chair of Koala Advisory Council)**



## Vision

Halt the decline of koala populations in the wild in South East Queensland, and secure their long-term survival.

Queenslanders value koalas, and love spotting them in their backyard. Koala populations are in decline, but halting that decline is not enough—koalas would still be considered vulnerable. The Queensland Government aims to grow the SEQ koala population so they are no longer under threat. To achieve this, a genuine and measurable increase in core koala habitat areas is required, along with targeted and effective threat reduction programs.

This is a long-term vision; in the short-term we can stabilise the population. Halting the decline requires a combination of management actions to protect and restore koala habitat and manage and reduce threats.

## Targets

The Queensland Government has established four key targets to track achievement of this vision:

1. Populations—stabilise koala population numbers in SEQ
2. Koala habitat—a net gain in the total core koala habitat area\*
3. Koala habitat restoration—commence rehabilitation to restore 10,000 hectares of koala habitat
4. Threat reduction—commence 10 programs in threat priority areas to support at least a 25 per cent reduction in disease, injury and mortality rates in those locations.

These high-level interrelated targets are designed to work together to put SEQ koala populations on the path to recovery. Achieving a net gain in core koala habitat requires koala habitat restoration. Threat reduction as well as protecting and restoring habitat is also necessary to stabilise koala populations. The actions outlined in this Strategy will all contribute to meeting these targets, which will be underpinned by a monitoring and evaluation plan to track progress.

\* Net gain consists of actual on-ground changes to koala habitat extent since 2020, such as through regrowth reaching 15 year maturity, restored habitat and cleared habitat, but excludes corrections to the mapping or transfer of locally refined koala habitat areas to core habitat, for example.



## What we've achieved so far

Achieving the vision of a sustainable koala population in the wild in SEQ requires a long-term commitment to the protection and expansion of koala habitat and effective threat mitigation actions.

The Queensland Government has already begun this work, implementing key reforms that respond to the recommendations of the Koala Expert Panel and providing a strong foundation for our future action.

### Koala Advisory Council

The Koala Advisory Council (KAC) was appointed in 2018. The KAC plays a pivotal role in guiding and coordinating koala conservation efforts by providing communication and collaboration pathways among Queensland Government departments, local councils, community organisations, non-government organisations and industry. The KAC's role includes:

- Providing advice to the government on the preparation, implementation and evaluation of this Strategy, and driving continuous improvement
- Engaging stakeholders to support the delivery of the Strategy
- Ensuring transparency and accountability in government decision-making by monitoring progress and endorsing annual reports
- Reviewing the monitoring and evaluation program and providing recommendations to ensure actions are on track to meet the Strategy's targets
- Ensuring koala conservation remains on the government's long-term agenda
- Representing the views of stakeholder networks.





## Spatial modelling for koalas in South East Queensland

The Queensland Government has developed state-of-the-art koala habitat mapping for SEQ using advanced modelling techniques and its expertise in Queensland-wide comprehensive habitat mapping. The mapped core koala habitat represents the best habitat for koala populations based on biophysical measures (including climate), suitable vegetation, and koala occurrence records.

Linking the new koala habitat mapping with the Queensland Government's existing vegetation and land-cover mapping, and utilising a species model with koala sighting data, allows the modelling to be refined as new information becomes available. Vegetation and koala habitat maps will be updated annually, to continue to accurately identify and protect the best quality habitat in the long term and track changes over time. Landholders can apply to add, amend or revoke areas in line with the core koala habitat area criteria.

**Koala priority areas** are large, connected areas that will focus efforts for habitat protection, restoration and threat management to areas that have the highest likelihood of achieving conservation outcomes for koalas.

**Core koala habitat areas** represent the best quality koala habitat areas, based on modeling of biophysical measures (such as climate), suitable vegetation (for both food and shelter), and koala sighting records.

**Locally refined koala habitat areas** include areas of mature vegetation that might not meet the State's criteria for core koala habitat areas, as defined by the State's mapping methodology. However, these areas may contain locally important vegetation for koalas, including some areas previously protected under local government planning schemes.

**Koala habitat restoration areas** identify land that could be restored and established as koala habitat areas. These areas feature low threats or constraints, and high conservation opportunities.

Restoration areas are non-statutory and will support policy decisions around environmental offsets and habitat restoration activities.

For more information on the new koala habitat mapping, see the technical report 'Spatial modelling for koalas in South East Queensland' on the Department of Environment and Science website.

## New koala conservation protections

Queensland's land-use planning framework is the primary means for protecting koala habitat into the future. The new planning framework implements strict new clearing restrictions, prohibiting the clearing of koala habitat areas within a koala priority area. It also regulates development in koala habitat areas outside a koala priority area, unless the activity is allowed under a strict set of exemptions that ensure safety and appropriate land management.

The new planning framework increases both the size and level of protections for koala habitat areas across SEQ compared with the State's previous regulatory framework.

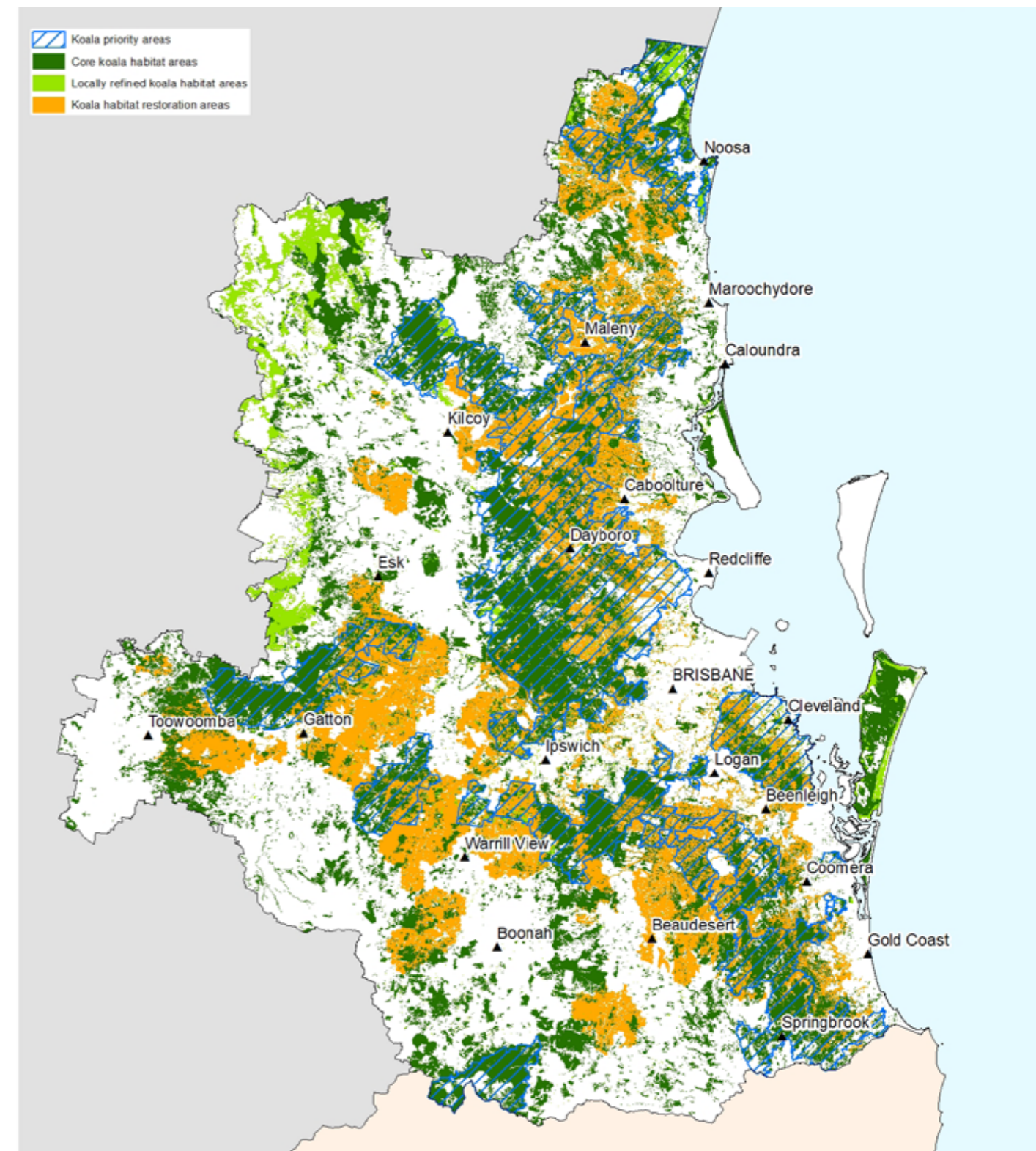
To deliver these increased protections the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation (Koala Protection) Amendment Regulation commenced on 7 February 2020 and amended the Environmental Offsets Regulation 2014, Planning Regulation 2017, Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2017 and the Vegetation Management Regulation 2012.

These strong new regulations prohibit the clearing of 330,660 hectares of koala habitat areas, within koala priority areas, subject to certain exemptions.

The Queensland Government also assumed responsibility for assessing development applications where the application proposes to clear koala habitat areas outside of a koala priority area (a further 385,606 hectares), against the new State Code 25: Development in South East Queensland koala habitat areas.

Proposed developments that do not involve clearing, but are within an area that is both a koala habitat area and a koala priority area, are subject to new assessment benchmarks that aim to prevent adverse impacts on the structure and function of koala habitat areas and maximise the safe and unimpeded movement of koalas through the landscape.

In addition, the Queensland Government is increasing its capacity to regulate activities impacting on koalas and koala habitat, consistent with powers under both the *Planning Act 2016*, *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and the *Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2017*. This includes an increased focus on auditing and compliance work for both approved activities and alleged illegal clearing activities.



Koala habitat mapping in SEQ, August 2020. Mapping is updated annually. Detailed property-scale maps are available on the Department of Environment and Science website.





# Action Area 1: Habitat protection

## Koala habitat is protected

Koalas live over a range of open forest and woodland communities, but ultimately their habitat is defined by the presence of a select group of food trees. Koalas are found in higher densities where food trees are growing on more fertile soils and along watercourses. They are also found in areas where their habitat has been partially cleared and in urban areas.

Protecting koala habitat from land clearing, as well as threats such as inappropriate fire regimes, invasive weeds and climate change impacts, is fundamental to safeguarding populations.

The Koala Expert Panel found that the land-use planning framework was a core contributor to the protection of koala habitat in SEQ into the future<sup>6</sup>. The Queensland Government has already introduced new koala conservation protections that respond to the Panel’s recommendations for a consistent approach across the region. These habitat protections are central to the Queensland Government’s koala conservation agenda and realisation of the vision in this Strategy.

The Nature Conservation and Other Legislation (Koala Protection) Amendment Regulation, which commenced on 7 February 2020, enabled the strongest protections yet on koala habitat areas within SEQ. Prohibited clearing and consistency in assessment at the state level will ensure koalas can persist in SEQ. The Queensland Government will work alongside other partners to ensure these measures are effective and supported by land use planning across all levels of government.

Action	Description	Partners	Timing
1.1	State-of-the-art koala habitat mapping	DES	Completed
1.2	New koala conservation protections	DES Former DSDMIP Local government	Completed
1.3	Monitor integration of koala conservation policy and review the State Planning Policy and ShapingSEQ (ShapingSEQ), the South East Queensland Regional Plan, to reflect current and future koala conservation policy	QT	2020–ongoing

Action	Description	Partners	Timing
1.4	Habitat protection in Queensland Government projects	Queensland Government	2021
1.5	Align the environmental offsets framework to support koala conservation	DES Local government	2022
1.6	Safeguard koala habitat by avoiding the expansion of the Urban Footprint into areas that predominately contain koala habitat	QT	2020–ongoing
1.7	Koala conservation in the planning framework – guidance and support	DES	2020–ongoing
1.8	Partner with natural resource managers and local government to support habitat protection on private land	DES Natural resource managers Local government	2020–ongoing
1.9	Support koala conservation policy integration in local planning schemes	DES QT Local government	2022
1.10	Support stakeholder understanding of environmental offsets	DES	2021

**Koala Expert Panel recommendation:** Simplify and strengthen the planning framework to ensure the effective and consistent long-term protection of koala habitats across SEQ, and resource incentive and partnership mechanisms to protect koala habitat on private land.

<sup>6</sup> Rhodes, J.R., A.Hood, A.Melzer, and A.Mucci. 2017. Queensland Koala Expert Panel: A new direction for the conservation of koalas in Queensland. A report to the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection. Queensland Government, Brisbane.





## Action Area 2: Habitat restoration for koalas

### Strategic and landscape-scale koala habitat restoration

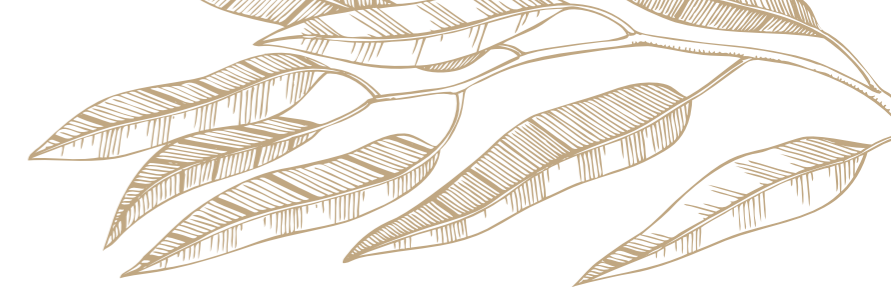
The Koala Expert Panel identified habitat restoration as being necessary for population recovery<sup>7</sup>. Restoration, above and beyond environmental offset outcomes provided by the planning framework, increases the overall habitat available for koalas and is vital in reaching our target for a net gain in core koala habitat areas. Restoration can also increase the connectivity between areas of habitat, which is important to the survival of koala populations across the region, enabling movement away from threats and supporting climate change adaptation.

A large proportion of koala habitat in SEQ is on privately-owned land, which means conservation on private land is crucial for the species' survival. Restoration of koala habitat may provide co-benefits to our environment, landholders and First Nations people by providing habitat for other species and ecosystems, reducing erosion, supporting pest management and carbon sequestration.

The Queensland Government and SEQ councils partner with landholders across the state to protect and restore ecosystems by delivering environmental offsets and through programs such as Land for Wildlife, the Nature Refuge program and the Queensland Government's flagship Land Restoration Fund. These programs also provide opportunities for income diversification and support regional communities.

Action	Description	Partners	Timing
2.1 Further investment in a Koala Habitat Restoration Program	The Queensland Government will establish partnerships with local government and regional natural resource managers for the restoration and assisted regeneration of koala habitat in koala priority areas and koala habitat restoration areas, building on an initial investment of \$1.96 million, and the delivery of environmental offsets.	DES Local government Natural resource managers	2020–ongoing
2.2 Strategically identify environmental offset locations	The Queensland Government will work in partnership, particularly with local government, to identify strategic offset locations for koalas in line with the Queensland Environmental Offsets Policy.	DES Local government	2021

<sup>7</sup> Rhodes, J.R., A.Hood, A.Melzer, and A.Mucci. 2017. *Queensland Koala Expert Panel: A new direction for the conservation of koalas in Queensland*. A report to the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection. Queensland Government, Brisbane.



Action	Description	Partners	Timing
2.3 Restore habitat on State land, including the protected area estate, in partnership with non-government organisations	The Queensland Government will seek to support and partner with non-government organisations to restore koala habitat, including through tree planting and assisted regeneration.	DES NGOs	2022
2.4 Invest in carbon farming projects that deliver koala outcomes as a priority	The Queensland Government will work with partners to identify potential opportunities to deliver aggregated carbon farming projects for koala habitat within priority restoration areas in SEQ.	DES Local government Natural resource managers	2021–2025

**Koala Expert Panel recommendation:** *Develop and adequately resource regulatory, incentive and partnership mechanisms to achieve strategic koala habitat restoration at landscape scales in South East Queensland, particularly in identified priority areas.*

## Case study

### Trees for koalas

The Land Restoration Fund's first large-scale project is the planting of 150,000 trees to create a new koala habitat and home for the glossy black cockatoo at Lake Wivenhoe.

The \$1.2 million project is a partnership between the Department of Environment and Science, Seqwater, and CO<sub>2</sub> Australia.

In addition to creating habitat, the project will reduce sediment run-off into the dam and generate carbon credits.

The project is already registered with the Australian Government's Clean Energy Regulator and is eligible to create Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs)—an ACCU is a tradable unit equivalent to one tonne of carbon dioxide avoided from being released to the atmosphere. This demonstration project will deliver a minimum of 10,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent abatement, plus a model that may facilitate future koala projects for later Land Restoration Fund investment rounds.





## Action Area 3: Threat management

### Coordinated threat reduction and koala population management

Threat mitigation and koala care is essential for ensuring the long-term viability of koalas in SEQ, particularly given the increased vulnerability of populations due to habitat loss and fragmentation.

Habitat loss, including from inappropriate fire regimes and invasive weeds, in addition to dog attacks, car strikes and disease, are some of the threats that affect koalas. The Koala Expert Panel found that the distribution of threats across SEQ varied significantly.

Climate scientists warn that forecasts of longer dry periods, rises in temperature, more intense bushfires, and severe droughts pose a significant risk to koalas. Koalas are highly susceptible to heat stress and dehydration, and across western Queensland they have been pushed beyond their climatic threshold.

Queensland experienced an unprecedented fire season in 2019–20, with 648 threatened species and their habitats impacted to some extent. This included potential impacts to 44,141 hectares of core koala habitat areas and 13,989 hectares of locally refined koala habitat areas. By mid-December 2019, the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network had recorded a combined total of 39 koalas admitted to care as a direct result of the bushfires.

Acting upon these threats can have far-reaching benefits as many of these threats can also impact other native and domestic animals, the agriculture and tourism sectors, and the community more broadly.

The Queensland Government has partnered with The University of Queensland to maintain KoalaBASE, an online database and research tool that tracks koala mortality in SEQ. KoalaBASE is used to identify trends in disease patterns and provides a real-time alert system for future disease outbreaks. KoalaBASE can also be used to construct threat maps.

The Queensland Government supports the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network in providing vital assistance to koalas in the region. The SEQ Koala Hospital Network, which includes Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, RSPCA Wildlife Hospital, Australia Zoo, Wildlife Foundation and the Moggill Koala Rehabilitation Centre provide rehabilitation services to sick and injured koalas in SEQ. Many koalas are rescued and transported to these hospitals in a coordinated response, by a network of dedicated volunteer carers.

Action	Description	Partners	Timing	
3.1	Identify priority areas for threat reduction	The Queensland Government, in partnership with local government, SEQ Wildlife Hospitals and koala carer groups, will prioritise threat reduction opportunities that address all threats to koalas, including disease, fire, climate change, and attacks by domestic and wild dogs.	DES Local government SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network	2022–ongoing
3.2	Partner with local government to deliver threat abatement opportunities	The Queensland Government will work cooperatively with local government, non-government organisations, and communities to introduce a targeted and transparent threat reduction program across South East Queensland.	DES Local government NGOs	2022–ongoing

Action	Description	Partners	Timing	
3.3	Update the Fauna Sensitive Road Design Manual	The Queensland Government will facilitate a peer review of the Koala-Sensitive Design Guideline for integration into the Fauna Sensitive Road Design Manual.	DTMR DES	2022
3.4	Integrate koala conservation into local government biosecurity planning	The Queensland Government will work with local government to ensure that biosecurity plans account for risks associated with threatened species management, as well as other environmental impacts.	DES	2022
3.5	Support the mitigation of threats of domestic dogs	The Queensland Government will partner with local government to examine ways to reduce impacts of domestic dogs, and support behaviour change programs in identified priority areas.	DES Local government	2021
3.6	Develop best-practice policies for koala rehabilitation	The Queensland Government will develop a new koala translocation policy based on International Union for Conservation of Nature best-practice guidelines and investigate where translocation could support reintroduction of koalas to empty habitat.	DES	2021
3.7	Support training and development of koala carers	The Queensland Government, in partnership with the SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network, will develop and deliver training and information for koala carers and veterinarians.	DES SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network	2020 - ongoing
3.8	KoalaBASE	KoalaBASE will be used to help in the identification of threat hotspots, and as a reporting tool to measure the effectiveness of threat reduction programs.	DES SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network	2020-ongoing
3.9	Apply Queensland-specific climate projection data to guide koala conservation	The Queensland Government will continue to provide Queensland-specific climate projection data, and to promote its use in long-term koala conservation.	DES	2020 - ongoing

**Koala Expert Panel recommendation:** Resource and implement a new coordinated threat reduction and koala population management strategy that complements habitat protection and restoration areas, particularly in identified priority areas.



## Case study

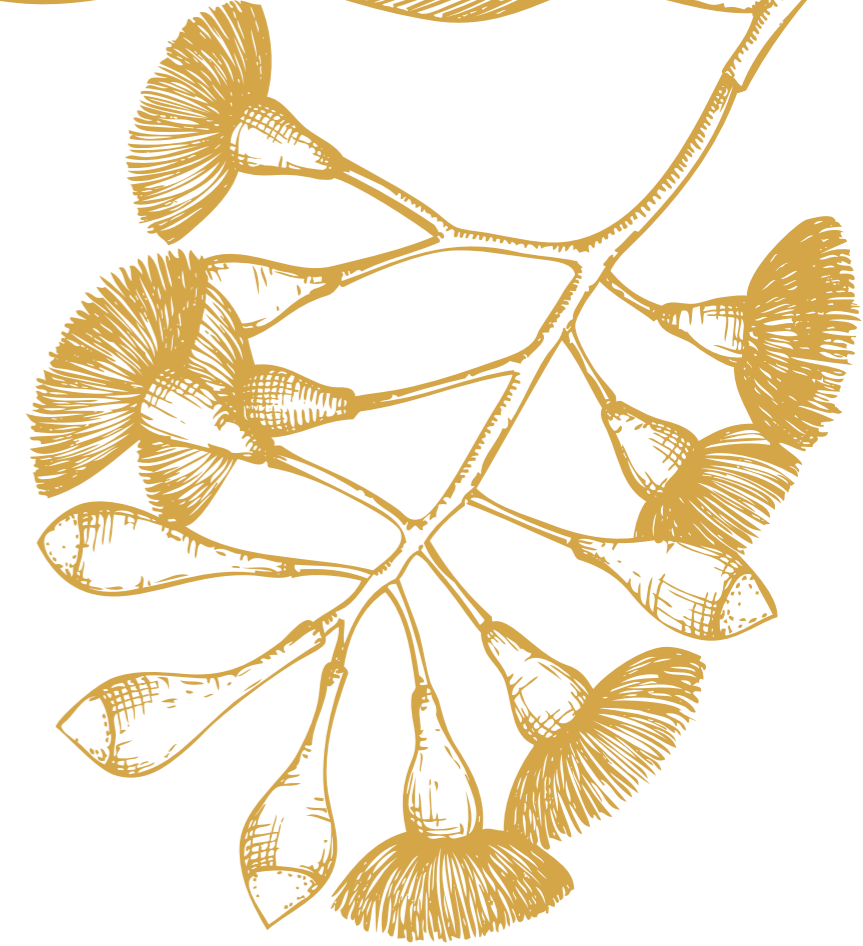
### Managing domestic dogs on the Gold Coast

The City of Gold Coast's Koala Conservation Plan identified the threat of domestic dogs as a major contributing factor to koala mortality within the city. To address this threat, the Council is proposing to introduce amendments to the Animal Management Local Law, to improve protection of koalas in identified koala areas.

Landowners with dogs in koala priority areas and koala habitat areas, identified through the Queensland Government's new koala habitat mapping, will be required under the proposed amendments to provide fencing that prevents a koala from entering the dog's area, or structures that easily allow the koala to leave the area. People keeping dogs on large properties over 2000m<sup>2</sup>, will also be required to contain their dog between dusk and dawn.

In addition, all dog owners in the City of Gold Coast area will have to contain their dog when they are aware a koala is in their yard.

To support the adoption of the proposed new laws, the City of Gold Coast will deliver an education and communications campaign to dog owners.







## Action Area 4: Improved mapping, monitoring, research and reporting

### Continuous monitoring and improvement based on the best available science

Improved science can drive improvements in koala conservation in SEQ and boost our understanding of their distribution and the impact of threats.

High quality koala habitat mapping, threat mapping and monitoring and research programs can help measure changes in koala populations and threats over time. This information can inform management decision making and help communicate outcomes in improving the conservation of koalas. Effective monitoring will be critical in understanding the impacts of climate change on SEQ koala populations and applying adaptive management to their conservation.

By working with our partners to share knowledge and align processes, we can be confident in measuring our progress towards achieving our shared vision for koala population recovery and adapting our management actions in response to conservation need.

Action	Description	Partners	Timing
4.1	Review koala habitat mapping at the conclusion of the Strategy period in 2025	DES	2025
4.2	Update koala habitat mapping annually	DES DNRME	2021–ongoing
4.3	Resolving locally refined koala habitat areas	DES	2020–2022
4.4	Habitat condition monitoring	DES	July 2021–Ongoing

Action	Description	Partners	Timing
4.5	Identify koala threats and develop mapping methodology	DES Local government DTMR QFES	2022–ongoing
4.6	Provide funding and support for koala conservation research	DES	2020–Ongoing
4.7	Monitoring and evaluation framework	DES Local government Research organisations	2020
4.8	SEQ koala monitoring program	DES	2021

**Koala Expert Panel recommendation:** *Develop targeted and high quality koala habitat mapping, threat mapping, monitoring and research programs that aim to: (1) identify key koala ecological values and threats, (2) measure changes in koala ecological values and threats over time, as well as understand the drivers of those changes, (3) inform policy and management decision making, and (4) communicate trends and outcomes transparently and publicly to enhance engagement.*





# Action Area 5: Community engagement

## Strong community engagement and partnerships

Successful koala conservation relies on a collaborative approach across all sectors, and communities have a role to play in protecting local koalas.

The high level of community support for the conservation of koalas provides an opportunity for a range of actions that contribute to our shared goals, from formal partnerships for habitat protection to awareness campaigns to reduce dog attacks.

There is already a significant number of Queenslanders participating in koala conservation by volunteering as wildlife carers or conserving habitat on their land. First Nations people are managing and restoring cultural landscapes, and families are learning more about what they can do by visiting environmental education centres and wildlife sanctuaries.

The benefits of koala rescue groups and their efforts in rescuing and rehabilitating koalas goes beyond saving koalas' lives as it also enhances community awareness and engagement, and results in improved and informed advocacy for koala protection.

Improving community engagement and communications can support communities to get involved and guide collaborative efforts in koala conservation by providing opportunities for input and information sharing with government and other stakeholders.

Action	Description	Partners	Timing
5.1 Host KoalaCollab	The Queensland Government will build on the success of the 2018 KoalaCollab by hosting a koala conservation conference every second year, tailored to the Action Areas of this Strategy, and providing an opportunity for our partners to present the findings of research funded under Community Sustainability Action Grants, and other research programs.	DES Research organisations Local government	2020 and then every two years
5.2 Engage with landholders and the community on ways to manage land for improved koala conservation outcomes	The Queensland Government will partner with local government and other organisations to build on current engagement activities and develop and deliver a statewide community engagement campaign on actions that drive koala conservation outcomes on private land.	DES Local government	2020–ongoing
5.3 Use citizen-science to support participation in koala conservation outcomes	The Queensland Government will use citizen science programs to help inform koala policy, monitoring and management, partner with conservation groups, promote community participation using koala-sighting tools, and identify and address knowledge gaps in existing citizen science programs.	DES NGOs Local government	2022–ongoing

Action	Description	Partners	Timing
5.4 Partner with local government and other organisations to deliver breeding-season community engagement activities to reduce vehicle-related koala injuries	The Queensland Government will partner with local government and other organisations to develop community engagement activities to reduce vehicle related injury and mortality in the breeding season, in line with other threat abatement activities.	DES DTMR Local government	2021–ongoing
5.5 Support communities to improve connectivity of potential koala habitat across property boundaries	The Queensland Government will work with local government to develop community engagement programs to promote good-neighbour behaviour in residents who live in the proximity of a protected area that contains koala habitat.	DES Local government	2020–ongoing
5.6 Recognise the importance of koalas to First Nations people and engage with First Nations people to work with their support and knowledge	The Queensland Government will strengthen cross-cultural knowledge exchange with First Nations people, and develop mutually beneficial and innovative partnerships for the management and conservation of koalas in SEQ.	DES DATSIP First Nations people	2021
5.7 Resolving community suggestions about the koala habitat mapping	The Queensland Government will provide the community and local government with a pathway to input data and information to inform decision making by the Queensland Government in the processes supporting the annual revision of koala habitat area mapping.	DES	2020

**Koala Expert Panel recommendation:** *Develop and implement a strategy for partnership development and engagement with the broader community, utilising an approach that is sensitive to the nature and views of local communities.*



# Case study

## Working together in Warner

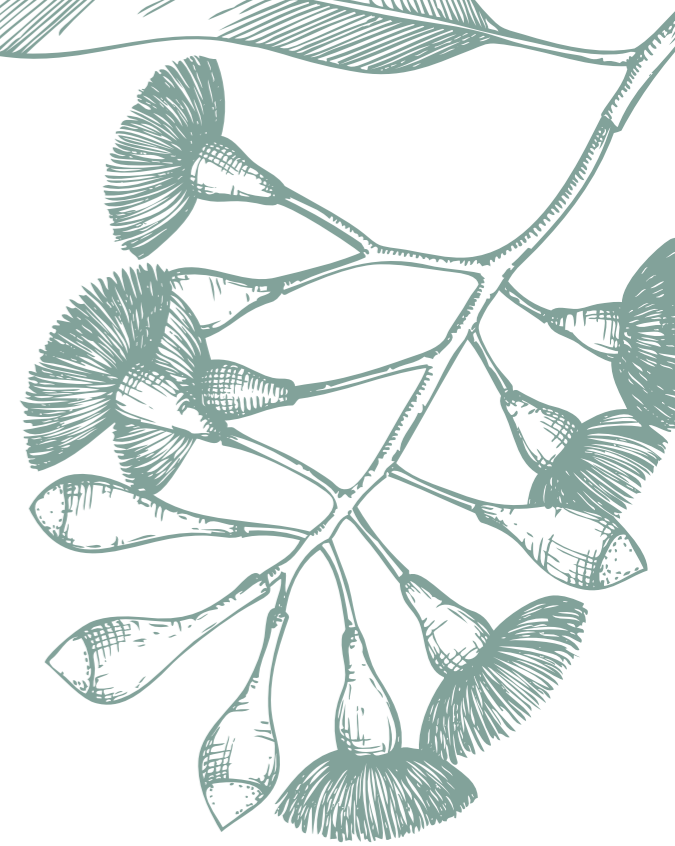
Warner, and neighbouring suburbs in the Moreton Bay Regional Council area, is home to a strong and passionate community of wildlife carers and advocates working together to protect koala populations in their area.

Warner Working Group is a novel example of how development, conservation and community stakeholders can collaborate to achieve shared outcomes with a common purpose, with members including representatives of koala care and rescue groups, local community members, Landcare and other local stakeholder groups.

The Group was established by CSR Limited, after the company proposed, for its existing clay quarry at Warner, an innovative residential development which is being designed in collaboration with the community to accommodate the movement of local koalas and wildlife.

So far, CSR and the Group have collaborated with Scouts groups, local schools and the community in tree planting, and ecologists and veterinary scientists in koala research, tracking the movements of local koala populations, and rehabilitating sick or injured koalas for release back into the wild.

The advocacy of the Warner Working Group has deepened understanding of the environmental values present in their area, providing for positive outcomes for both wildlife and the community into the future.







# Action Area 6: Partnerships and strategic coordination

## A strategic and coordinated approach to koala conservation

The Koala Expert Panel noted that many different stakeholder groups were involved in koala conservation actions, including helping to address threats. The coordination of conservation efforts across multiple levels of government, community, non-government organisations and industry is therefore critical to achieving the long-term recovery and persistence of koalas in SEQ.

The Queensland Government established the Koala Advisory Council (KAC) in 2018 to work collaboratively in developing and delivering this Strategy. Membership of the Council spans a broad range of sectors—including researchers, natural resource managers, koala carers, First Nations people, environmental groups, state and local government, and industry—whose stakeholder networks will facilitate the development of new partnerships in koala conservation.

The Queensland Government already partners with a broad array of organisations in delivering koala conservation outcomes. Establishing more of these partnerships and empowering collaboration between these groups will boost collective expertise and efficiency.

Improved governance arrangements will support these partnerships, and the coordination of activities across sectors, leveraging resources and capabilities to achieve improved outcomes in koala conservation.

Action	Description	Partners	Timing
6.1	Transparent implementation, evaluation and continuous improvement	DES KAC members	2020–ongoing
6.2	Strategic assessment for South East Queensland	QT DES Australian Government	Ongoing–2022
6.3	Build an online hub of koala related information	DES	2020–ongoing

Action	Description	Partners	Timing
6.4	Mid-term Strategy review	DES KAC members	2022
6.5	Establish a local government working group	DES Local government	2020–ongoing
6.6	Establish a Technical Advisory Group	DES Ecologists	2020–ongoing
6.7	An investment strategy for koala conservation	DES	2020–2021
6.8	Stakeholder engagement strategy	DES	2020–2021

**Koala Expert Panel recommendation:** *Develop a mechanism for implementing a strategic action plan for koalas that ensures coordination across multiple levels of government, community non-government organisations and industry to achieve the long-term recovery and persistence of koalas in South East Queensland.*

## Glossary

Acronym	Term
DES	Department of Environment and Science
DNRME	Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy
DSDMIP	Former Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning
DTMR	Department of Transport and Main Roads
KAC	Koala Advisory Council
KEP	Koala Expert Panel
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
SEQ	South East Queensland
QFES	Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
QT	Queensland Treasury





# Strategic implementation framework

Through this South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy, the Queensland Government commits to providing leadership for more strategic and coordinated action and investment in koala conservation across government, research, business and industry, wildlife care, land restoration and community partnerships.

To realise this, the Queensland Government will establish frameworks for cooperative investment, and monitoring and evaluation, which support outcomes over the life of the Strategy and set us in the right direction for koala population recovery in the long term.

## Leading for success

Proper governance and coordination between the key partners will be essential for effective and efficient implementation of this Strategy. The Queensland Government will lead coordination and support the work of governance bodies including the following:

**Koala Advisory Council**—There are many stakeholders with an interest and a role in koala conservation. The KAC is independently chaired and plays a coordination role by facilitating communication and collaboration with their stakeholder groups and representing stakeholder interests about the development and implementation of the Strategy. Members include Queensland Government departments, local councils, community organisations, non-government organisations and industry. The KAC will play a key role in guiding, monitoring and reporting progress with implementation of this Strategy.

**Koala Technical Advisory Group**—The Department of Environment and Science, through the Queensland Herbarium, will prepare and update koala habitat area maps annually based on current science and new information. The Koala Technical Advisory Group will form an independent advisory body that will provide a review function to inform annual koala habitat map updates.

**Local Government Working Group**—All levels of government have a role in delivering this Strategy. Local government and their communities have knowledge about local koala populations and threats, and significant experience in delivering conservation initiatives. This group will bring local government representatives from across SEQ together with the Queensland Government, experts, and key stakeholders with a role in delivering conservation activities on the ground. It will facilitate local government involvement in Strategy implementation—supporting coordination, collaboration and innovation.

Terms of Reference for these groups will be made available on the Department of Environment and Science website.

## Partnering for success

The Queensland Government will develop an implementation plan with partners which sets out the delivery of actions through partnerships with local government, natural resource managers and conservation groups, non-government organisations, wildlife hospitals and carers, industry and other stakeholders. Communities can get involved in koala conservation activities such as citizen science and information campaigns, and by providing information to inform koala mapping.

## Investing for success

The Queensland Government will develop a two stage koala conservation investment strategy for SEQ that plans and monitors annual investment in koala conservation:

Phase 1 (2020–22):

- commence planning and delivery of all Action Areas
- community engagement and partnership activity to support and drive delivery
- develop and pilot threat management and restoration activities with partners
- plan for investment from diversified sources to deliver all threat management and restoration actions.

Phase 2 (2022–25):

- continue delivery of all Action Areas
- scale up delivery of threat management and restoration activities.

## Measuring for success

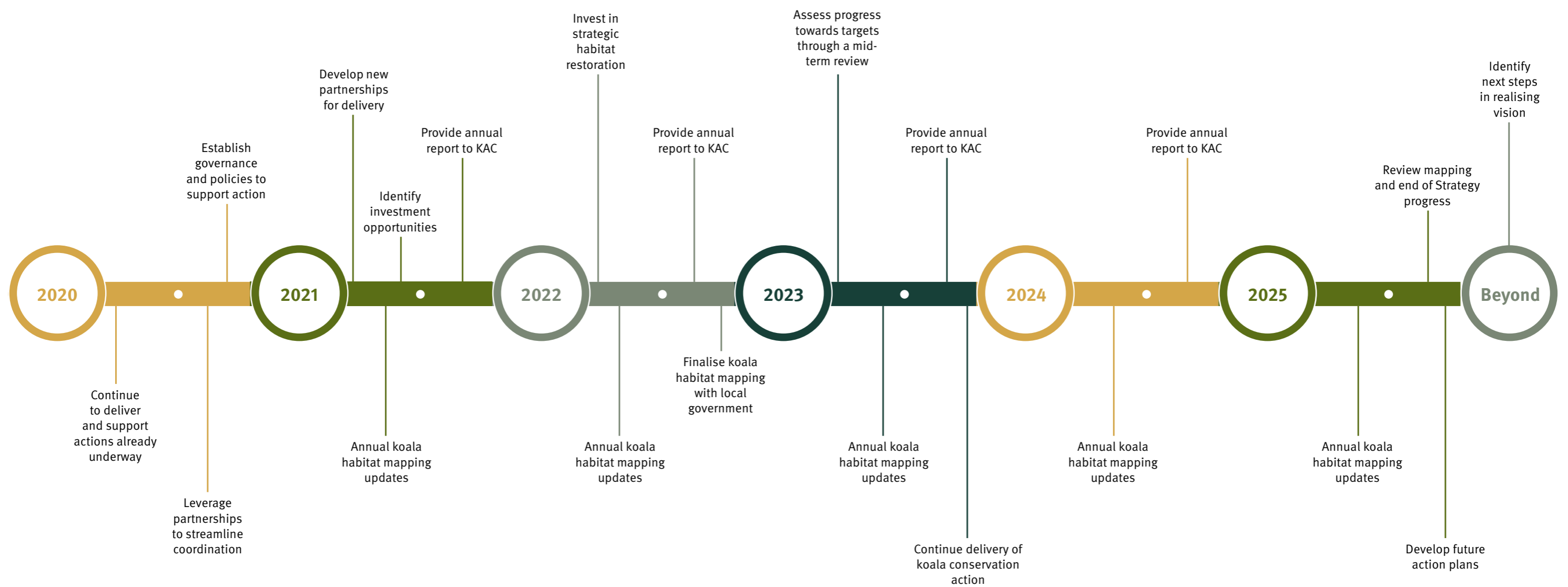
The Queensland Government will establish a monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement framework that measures our progress against the Strategy’s targets by:

- monitoring koala populations at representative sites across SEQ, in rural and urban landscapes
- using the Queensland Government’s expertise in state-wide vegetation mapping to track changes in core koala habitat area
- collating information on the area of koala habitat under active restoration from known partnerships and initiatives
- analysing trends in koala injury and mortality data at 10 threat priority areas, where a threat management program has commenced.

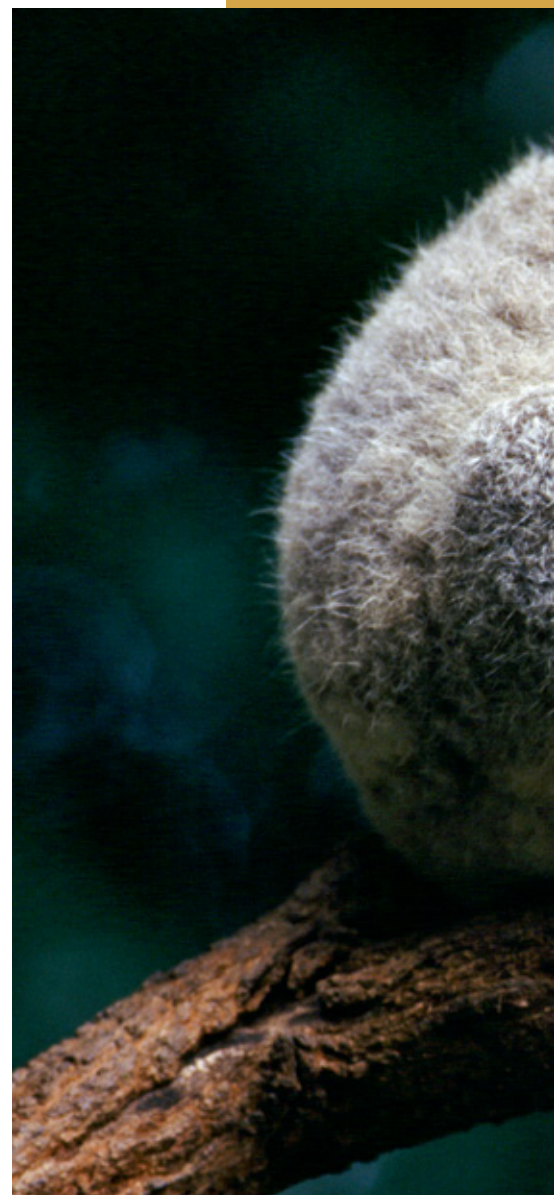
A monitoring and evaluation framework will also measure the success of individual actions within this Strategy, including activities that are already underway, and identify how each contributes towards the targets and vision.











The Queensland Government acknowledges and respects the rights, responsibilities, knowledge and aspirations of Indigenous peoples. Central to the conservation of the koala and other threatened species, is the recognition of the spiritual and cultural relationship with this iconic species, and the critical role of Indigenous peoples as custodians of their land. Respect is paid to the Elders, past and present, of Queensland's lands and waters.