



South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2020–2025

Protecting koalas now and for future
generations—Community Summary



Queensland
Government

Very few things symbolise Australia like the koala.

Loved by people all over the world, many Queenslanders are fortunate enough to share their backyard and neighbourhood with this precious and iconic species. However, living side-by-side has put enormous pressure on our wild koala populations.

Queensland's largest population of wild koalas live in the state's most densely populated and developed region—South East Queensland (SEQ).

The competition for land has resulted in:

- less natural habitat, particularly eucalypt trees and forests that provide food and shelter
- fragmentation of landscapes, making it more difficult for koalas to safely move around
- human-introduced dangers from cars and pets
- increased stressed-related diseases caused by these factors.

The more frequent and greater intensity of natural events like bushfires and droughts, as a result of climate change, has also had a major impact.

If we are to secure the long-term survival of SEQ wild koalas populations, we need to act now and together—governments, business, industry, and community all playing their part to ease the various pressures that endanger our koalas, and secure the best habitat for their survival.





Fast facts—koala habitat

- Koalas and habitat are of deep cultural and spiritual importance to our First Nations people—vital parts of the wildlife and country they have been caring for thousands of generations.
- Almost three quarters (72 per cent) of remnant core koala habitat has been cleared in SEQ since 1960.
- Each koala has a ‘home range’ made up of particular trees and areas that they move around in.
- Koalas move across the ground to forage, find mates and sometimes to find new habitats, often moving through obstructions like backyards and roads.
- Adult koalas can eat up to 1 kilogram of gum leaves each night.
- Koalas spend most of the day sleeping while they digest the toxic and fibrous gum leaves and conserve energy for movement at night.
- In 2020 the Queensland Government introduced strict new clearing restrictions, prohibiting clearing of koala habitat within koala priority areas, and regulating development in these areas across SEQ.
- Koala habitat areas were mapped using the latest science and modelling techniques to determine areas that will achieve the highest conservation outcomes for koalas in SEQ.



The plan

The Queensland Government's *South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2020–2025* (the Strategy) outlines the actions that will be delivered to reverse the decline in koala populations across SEQ, and secure their long-term survival.

The Strategy was developed in close consultation with the Queensland Government-appointed Koala Advisory Council—which includes representatives from state and local government, community organisations, non-government organisations and industry—and responds to the key recommendations of the Koala Expert Panel.

The key areas of action focus on:

Protecting and restoring koala habitat

New, state-of-the-art koala habitat modelling is being used to determine the most important areas needed for healthy wild koala populations. This modelling will ensure we accurately identify areas with the most suitable vegetation, soil and climate to support koala populations in the long term.

Across SEQ, 716,266 hectares are now regulated as koala habitat areas—the largest and strongest protections our region has ever seen. Clearing koala habitat areas in the new koala priority areas will not be permitted, except for certain exemptions.

We have also identified areas that will be most suited for habitat restoration. The government will target these areas for intensive restoration efforts to ensure koalas have access to a thriving environment that can support a growing, healthy population.

Koala habitat area maps will be updated each year to ensure that we're always protecting the best habitat for koalas and tracking changes over time.

Community members will be able to contribute to the mapping process by recording koala sightings in their neighbourhoods.



Managing threats and caring for koalas

Threat reduction and koala care programs are being developed in collaboration with koala experts, councils, conservation groups and the community. There will be a role for everyone in delivering these programs, designed to reduce the various threats to our wild koala populations. Work will include activities such as:

- weed and invasive species management to increase the health of natural habitat
- education and engagement with community members to reduce negative animal interactions and other backyard dangers
- education and signage for drivers, and koala-safe infrastructure and crossings around particular roads where koalas may cross
- education regarding responsible dog ownership in koala areas
- support for koala carers and facilities that provide vital assistance to sick and injured koalas
- other work to reduce threats, and protect and restore habitat.

The strategy in action

To achieve the highest conservation outcomes for koalas, the Queensland Government will provide leadership for more strategic and coordinated action and investment across government, research, business and industry, wildlife care, land restoration and community partnerships.

The Queensland Government is establishing the following expert groups to lead and govern this work:

- **Koala Advisory Council:** to guide and coordinate koala conservation efforts and promote cross-sector collaboration.
- **Koala Technical Advisory Group:** to support the annual update of koala habitat maps based on leading science, new information, and community input.
- **Local Government Working Group:** to help deliver on-ground action and share local knowledge and expertise.

The Queensland Government will also establish an intra-governmental committee to ensure there is the necessary coordination and commitment across all areas of government to support implementation of the Strategy.

What success will look like

Success will be monitored and reported against the following targets, to be achieved by 2025:

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

To boost collective expertise and cross-sector collaboration, we will strengthen our partnerships with councils, natural resource management groups, environment organisations, researchers, wildlife care groups and others through the Koala Advisory Council.

We will also establish new partnerships—including through a new Local Government Working Group—to increase collaboration in delivering habitat restoration and other koala conservation outcomes.

These partnerships will leverage collective resources, capabilities and expertise to support management actions.





What you can do to help

If you live in SEQ, there are things you can do to help:

- keep native vegetation on your block of land or plant eucalypt trees
- drive carefully and look out for koala crossing signs
- consider koala-friendly fencing options, this may be as simple as adding a couple of extra posts to allow koalas to climb over safely
- look at ways to ensure koalas can't drown in your pool, there are some easy solutions like floating a sturdy rope for koalas to pull themselves out with
- contact the Koala ambulance on 1300 ANIMAL (1300 264 625) if you suspect a koala is unhealthy and in need of assistance, and provide any information about the koala's condition. For example, does it have a wet and dirty bottom (cystitis), or inflamed eyes (conjunctivitis)
- volunteer at, or support your local koala care service such as the Moggill Koala Rehabilitation Centre, Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital, Currumbin Wildlife Hospital or RSPCA Queensland
- participate in community habitat restoration work by joining a local catchment or conservation group
- Participate in citizen science activities to monitor koala populations and habitat and measure the responses to actions implemented under the strategy
- Provide input to the annual koala map update by participating in citizen science programs or making a formal submission.



More information

To view the South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2020–2025 or find out more information about the targets, actions and mapping, visit: www.qld.gov.au/seqkoalas

Koala habitat interactive maps can be viewed via the Queensland Globe at: <https://qldglobe.information.qld.gov.au>