

Updating the Queensland Government's koala habitat map



The development of new koala habitat mapping was recommended by the Koala Expert Panel and introduced by the Queensland Government in February 2020.

The new map overcomes limitations of previous mapping, such as inconsistencies in the way koala habitat was mapped across the 12 South East Queensland (SEQ) local government areas.

A feature of the new maps is an improved ability to update and refine the map as new data becomes available. This will ensure that the best quality habitat for koalas is protected now and into the future.

The koala habitat map will be updated annually.

New versions will reflect changes in koala habitat and incorporate new data and ongoing improvements in modelling techniques.



What is the August koala habitat mapping update?

In December 2019 the new koala habitat mapping was released for public consultation to provide feedback on the areas mapped. Over 400 requests were made to amend the draft map during the consultation, and the map was finalised to support commencement of new koala conservation protections within the planning framework on 7 February 2020.

Since that time, the Department of Environment and Science has produced updated high value regrowth mapping data and has subsequently updated the locally refined koala habitat area map in SEQ, in line with release of the final South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy (the Strategy).



**Queensland
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How is the Queensland Government consulting with local governments on koala habitat maps?

Locally refined koala habitat areas include areas of mature vegetation that might not meet the Queensland Government's criteria for core koala habitat areas. However, these areas may include locally important vegetation for koalas, including some areas previously protected under local government planning schemes. Locally refined koala habitat areas are provided the same level of protection, within Queensland's planning framework, as core koala habitat.

The Department of Environment and Science has been consulting with local governments on the mapping updates since February 2020. The department is working with local governments on the transitional process for locally refined koala habitat areas, including opportunities for protection through local government planning schemes.



Local governments will also be encouraged to provide any new koala records they've captured since October 2019 to inform the koala habitat maps.

The Queensland Government is also working to provide local governments with improved options for updating local planning instruments to enable them to improve their biodiversity mapping, which may include scattered habitat trees not mapped by the State.



How can landholders and communities provide input to the map?

Landholders can now apply to the Department of Environment and Science to make, amend or revoke koala habitat area mapping on their land following the approved process, with changes taking effect if it is determined that the map requires amendment. Areas are assessed against the core koala habitat area methodology to ensure consistency in definition and scale across South East Queensland. A guideline and application form are available on the **Department of Environment and Science website**.

Through consultation on the draft Strategy, many local governments and community members were keen to have the opportunity to provide further input on koala habitat mapping by identifying areas and new data for consideration in the annual map update.

In response to this feedback the Queensland Government is developing a pathway for both local governments and the community to submit information for consideration in the annual koala habitat map update. The proposed pathway would provide two avenues of engagement, a) citizen science, and b) a formal submission.

To support engagement in the mapping through citizen science, the Queensland Government will develop an online data portal and koala sighting app, where communities will be able to provide relevant information about local koala populations and habitat, such as vegetation and biophysical data or koala sighting records.

The formal submission process will enable local governments and communities to make technical submissions based on the criteria associated with the existing endorsed modelling and mapping approach identifying areas for consideration in the annual update of the koala habitat map. The submission process will be supported by an independent Koala Technical Advisory Group consisting of experts with advanced technical knowledge in koala ecology and habitat mapping.

The community pathway is under development and will be used to support future annual koala habitat map updates. Further detail on the community pathway will be made available on the **Department of Environment and Science website**.