



Koala Conservation Response

**The Queensland Government Response
to the Queensland Koala Expert Panel's Report**

*A new direction for the conservation
of koalas in Queensland*



Minister's foreword

The koala is an iconic species of state, national and international importance. When data was released in 2016 that showed a declining koala population, despite dedicated policy and planning responses, the Queensland Government commissioned a Koala Expert Panel to provide advice on actions to ensure the long-term persistence of koala populations in the wild within South East Queensland.

The Koala Expert Panel has conducted an extensive review of Queensland's koala policies and provided their findings to the Queensland Government in a report titled *Queensland Koala Expert Panel: A new direction for the conservation of koalas in Queensland*.

The Panel's report sets the agenda for a comprehensive and cohesive approach to the management of this threatened species. The integrated set of recommendations addresses the decline of koalas in South East Queensland due to the many pressures the population faces, including development, car strike, dog attack and diseases. The recommendations provide a thorough and innovative template to balance development and koala persistence; a complex and challenging task, particularly in urban landscapes.

The Panel's recommendations are supported by a number of detailed actions. In consultation with stakeholders, the Queensland Government will deliver a long term strategy to implement these actions.

Koala conservation requires a strongly collaborative effort across many stakeholders. This strategy will deliver a multifaceted approach that combines the protection of koala habitat through the planning framework, together with actions to address the impact of other threats that are cumulatively driving declines in many populations.

Fundamental to the Panel's recommendations is the development of a strategic and coordinated approach to koala conservation. Koala conservation is not just the responsibility of the Queensland Government, nor does the Queensland Government have all the means to respond. We will work closely with stakeholders to implement the Panel's recommendations. Enhancing partnerships with local governments, in particular, will be a key component to achieving koala conservation.

The Panel has provided specific recommendations about how the Queensland Government can better protect koala habitat through amendments to the planning framework, targeted investment in rehabilitation of habitat and the development of threat reduction measures.

This response accepts, and supports, the Panel's six recommendations and details a way forward to start implementing the recommended actions.

The Panel's report, and the Queensland Government's response, heralds a new approach to conservation measures for koalas in South East Queensland for our future generations.

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Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef
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Executive summary

The Koala Expert Panel's (the Panel) recommendations are designed to drive a new, integrated approach to koala conservation that will deliver increased habitat conservation, threat reduction and, ultimately, population sustainability.

The Queensland Government recognises the scope of this challenge and is committed to working with stakeholders to deliver solutions to the critical task of protecting Queensland's koalas.

The Panel was formed in 2016 in response to the Uniquist report titled "South East Queensland Koala Population Modelling Study". The landmark study concluded that, between 1996 and 2014, there was clear statistical evidence of a decline in koala population densities of around 80% in the Koala Coast and 54% in the Pine Rivers area, despite current protection measures.

The Panel was established to provide the Queensland Government with realistic and achievable recommendations to reverse the decline in koala population densities and ensure the long-term persistence of koala populations in the wild in South East Queensland (SEQ).

The Panel's year-long review included extensive consultation with both public and industry sectors. It also included an in-depth analysis of existing measures, an expert elicitation process, and utilised the best available research.

The Panel's final report details six recommendations on changes to policy to address the ongoing decline in koalas in SEQ.

At the core of the Panel's recommendations is a call for a more strategic and coordinated approach to koala conservation. Decades of koala conservation measures have, in the absence of coordinated effort, failed to address population decline. A much greater focus on engagement and development of partnerships with other stakeholders, particularly local government, is critical to reversing the decline in koala populations.

The Panel also proposed specific actions to achieve the recommendations that the Queensland Government will work with stakeholders to implement.

The creation of a Koala Advisory Council, consisting of members from state and local governments, the community, non-government organisations and industry will play an important coordination role. The Koala Advisory Council will also ensure transparency and accountability in decision-making by evaluating the outcomes of koala conservation measures.

A key mechanism to deliver a more coordinated approach to land use planning is the proposed SEQ strategic assessment. The strategic assessment will address the cumulative, landscape scale impacts of development on matters of national environmental significance in SEQ, including koalas, which result from project-by-project development approvals. This approach will give certainty to all stakeholders and improve strategic planning with respect to the protection of habitat.



1. Implementing the recommendations

Implementation of the recommendations of the Panel will be progressed in three phases:

1. Immediate initiatives:

- The Queensland Government will commence a review of the components of the planning framework that relate to koala habitat protection.
- The Queensland Government will continue existing conservation programs, such as koala rehabilitation programs, finalise revised koala threats mapping in SEQ, and identify priority areas for koala conservation efforts.

2. Within three to six months of release of the Panel's final report:

- The Queensland Government will appoint a Koala Advisory Council that will include representatives from relevant Queensland Government departments, local governments, community, non-government organisations (NGOs) and industry. The Koala Advisory Council will:
 - » provide advice to Government on the implementation of the Koala Conservation Strategy;
 - » fulfil a coordination role by providing communication and collaboration pathways among government, the community, NGOs and industry;

- » improve transparency and accountability in decision making; and
- » assist in evaluating the outcomes of the monitoring and evaluation programs.

3. Within 12 months of release of the Panel's final report:

- The Queensland Government will develop and commence implementing a Koala Conservation Strategy (the Strategy). The Strategy will detail how the Panel's recommended actions will be resourced and delivered. In particular the Strategy will:
 - » identify clear, realistic and measurable time-based targets for koala habitat and populations;
 - » identify a network of connected priority areas that will be the primary focus of conservation efforts;
 - » identify the activities that will be undertaken, where, when and by whom;
 - » describe a monitoring and evaluation strategy that measures progress against targets; and
 - » review and clarify the planning regulatory provisions related to koala habitat.

2. Queensland drivers

A 2015 Uniquist report titled "South East Queensland Koala Population Modelling Study" (the report) presented findings of an independent assessment of the conservation status of the koala in seven local government areas (Moreton Bay, Noosa, Ipswich, Brisbane, Redland, Logan, Gold Coast and parts of Toowoomba).

Using survey data between 1996 and 2014, the report concluded there was strong evidence of a rapid decline with an estimated 80% decline in the Koala Coast and 54% in Pine Rivers. The report also indicated that there was evidence that the rate of decline had increased over time.

Over the past 20 years, a number of strategies for the protection of koalas and their habitat have been in place. However, the Panel identified that these strategies have lacked coordination

across the SEQ region and across key partners, such as state and local governments, interest groups and the science community.

In SEQ, the decline in the koala population is the result of a number of factors, none of which should be considered in isolation. While habitat loss is clearly the most significant problem affecting koalas, it needs to be addressed in conjunction with other factors such as disease management, traffic impacts, dog attacks and effective rescue and rehabilitation programs.

It is imperative that future policies and management approaches learn from the existing strategies to deliver effective, coordinated and better informed koala conservation strategies.

3. Progress to date



4. What we are already doing

While the Panel conducted its review, the Queensland Government continued existing koala conservation measures. These were activities which would not pre-empt future changes in direction. They allowed the Queensland Government to continue gathering important data through surveying and modelling habitat and funding research that will inform more effective koala conservation policy and management activities.

4.1 Survey program

In SEQ, repeated population surveys of koalas have been conducted by the Queensland Government, over an extended period, to build a picture of population trends and understand where critical populations occur. In 2016-17, koala distribution surveys were conducted in parts of the Somerset, Lockyer, Gold Coast and Scenic Rim Local Government Areas.

A koala monitoring plan, incorporating recommendations from the Panel, is currently being drafted.

4.2 Moggill Koala Rehabilitation Centre

The Moggill Koala Rehabilitation Centre, formerly the Moggill Koala Hospital, has been operating for 25 years and, as part of the development of a SEQ Wildlife Hospital Network, refocused its operations onto rehabilitation. This is part of a coordinated pathway whereby sick and injured koalas receive focused care at each stage of their treatment, rehabilitation and release. The Moggill Koala Rehabilitation Centre will also continue to contribute towards research into koala treatment and rehabilitation techniques.

4.3 Spatial modelling and planning for koalas in SEQ

New koala habitat modelling and mapping has been developed that identifies conservation values and management options to enhance the long-term viability of koalas within the southern portion of the SEQ bioregion. Following endorsement by the Panel, this mapping will be considered for inclusion in essential habitat mapping for the purposes of the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*.

4.4 Koala Conservation Landscapes

The Queensland Government proposed the establishment of two supported koala conservation precincts in 2016. The intent of the precincts was to provide secure populations of koalas in a near natural setting within the SEQ coastal zone, and maintain the opportunity for both the local community and tourists to see koalas in a wild setting.

The Panel was asked to review this proposal and raised a number of concerns including how they would complement other strategic initiatives and whether long-term funding would be provided for ongoing management. Nonetheless, the Panel considers that there is a place for well-defined koala management areas and recommended that a network of connected priority areas for koalas be identified. These areas should provide a focus for government initiatives for habitat protection and restoration, threat reduction programs, community partnerships, and recovery actions for koalas across SEQ. Planning to establish priority areas that meet the Panel's recommendations has commenced.

4.5 Community Sustainability Action Grant Program—Koala Research

In 2016, the Queensland Government introduced a grant program to fund research that would inform more effective koala conservation policy and management activities. Ten recipients were successful in applying for almost \$600,000 in grant funding to deliver projects that include assessment of the effectiveness of koala offsets and the appropriateness of current translocation policies.

4.6 State planning instruments

In July 2017, the commencement of the new *Planning Act 2016* saw the continuation of the Queensland Government's development assessment requirements for the protection of koala habitat, by incorporating the former SEQ Koala Conservation State Planning Regulatory Provisions into the new Planning Regulation 2017. These provisions continue to be administered by local governments in their assessment of development within defined koala habitat areas.

The Panel's initial comments on the draft State Planning Policy and South East Queensland Regional Plan 2017 (*ShapingSEQ*) were considered in finalising both state planning instruments and resulted in a number of key changes relating to the better protection of koala habitat. The Panel advised that the protection of existing habitat was critical to sustaining existing koala populations, not just the replacement or restoration of habitat.

4.6.1 State Planning Policy (SPP)

Regarding the SPP State interest—biodiversity, the Panel recommended that koala policy in SEQ better reflect the state's aim of maintaining a viable wild koala population, supported through the identification, preservation and enhancement of koala habitat.

To reflect the Panel's advice, the finalised SPP, dated July 2017, includes an updated policy requiring SEQ local governments to protect viable koala populations through the conservation and enhancement of koala habitat. This replaced the previous policy requiring SEQ local governments to achieve a net gain in koala habitat. The SPP State interest - biodiversity was also amended to recognise the koala as an iconic and highly valued species for many communities across Queensland.

4.6.2 *ShapingSEQ*

ShapingSEQ is the statutory regional plan for SEQ and sets the planning direction for sustainability, global competitiveness and high-quality living. *ShapingSEQ* divides all land in SEQ into land use categories, which are in turn used to define SEQ's desired, long-term settlement pattern and to help plan and manage growth across the region.

The Panel's comments on the draft *ShapingSEQ* suggested greater emphasis be placed on the preservation of the koala, and reaching an appropriate balance between development and koala preservation. In response, *ShapingSEQ* places a high priority on the delivery of a SEQ Koala Conservation Strategy, to be led by the Department of Environment and Science (DES), which is intended to deliver on the Queensland Government's response to the Panel.

Other key changes, based on the Panel's feedback, made in finalising *ShapingSEQ* include:

- specific reference in the 50 year vision for the 'Sustain' theme to maintain the SEQ koala population through innovative protection of their habitat and management of threats across the region's landscapes;
- a new koala element and strategy in the 'Sustain' theme to ensure a network of interconnected koala habitat is maintained to sustain the SEQ's koala population over the long-term; and
- an amendment to the urban footprint principles to ensure that areas containing significant koala habitat outside of the urban footprint are not included in the urban footprint through future reviews or growth monitoring programs.

4.7 Strategic assessment for SEQ

A key implementation action for *ShapingSEQ* is the preparation of a strategic assessment for the SEQ region. Strategic assessment enables up-front and streamlined assessment under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) to ensure all relevant matters of national environmental significance have been properly addressed when development projects proceed. A strategic assessment aims to establish a basis on which applications, which would have otherwise been referred to the Commonwealth Government, may be appropriately dealt with by the state planning system. This will have the effect of simplifying and streamlining assessment of matters of national environmental significance, including the SEQ koala population and their habitat.

The strategic assessment has recently been commenced by the Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning.

Throughout the preparation of the strategic assessment, the Queensland Government will work closely with the Commonwealth, SEQ local governments and other key stakeholders. This will ensure all relevant environmental issues are fully considered from the outset.

5. Piloting a new approach

The Noosa Koala Corridor Pilot is a collaborative project that will rehabilitate core koala habitat within the Noosa hinterland—enhancing and linking fragmented habitat. Exotic pine plantations within Yurol and Ringtail State Forests will be cleared and re-established as native forest providing important koala habitat and connecting existing koala habitat in the region. Production native forests, including hardwood plantations in this area, will also be rehabilitated and ultimately converted to protected area.

The project involves local government (Noosa Shire Council), a community group (Noosa Parks Association), industry (HQPlantations Queensland) and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to transition a 2400 hectare forestry site to a koala corridor.

The Yurol and Ringtail State Forests connect core koala habitat between the Tewantin section of Noosa National Park to the south and Cooloola to the north east. Through a \$3.5 million

investment, jointly funded by the Department of Environment and Science, Noosa Shire Council and Noosa Parks Association, the land will be progressively rehabilitated and transitioned to the protected area estate. Continuous rehabilitation and monitoring will be undertaken by the Noosa Shire Council, Noosa Parks Association and government partners.

In line with the Panel's key recommendations, koala threats will be actively managed and monitored, and the social and economic benefits of public access maintained. Achieving conservation outcomes of this scale and in this region would not have been possible without such a partnership approach.

The Panel's recommendations will inform a new strategy for koala conservation in Queensland. The Noosa Koala Corridor Pilot is a way for the Queensland Government to commence koala conservation measures in line with the Panel's recommendations and the lessons learned will be used to refine the implementation of a number of the Panel's recommendations.

6. Principles underpinning the recommendations

The Panel have detailed core principles that underpin their recommendations:

- Acknowledge that koalas are an iconic species, and are culturally important for Traditional Owners.
- Both habitat protection and threat reduction are critical. Effective solutions must be holistic and multi-faceted.
- A strategic coordinated and collaborative approach is required.
- There are direct conflicts between koala conservation and societal goals which should be explicitly considered.
- Koala populations in both rural and urban areas are important.
- Community partnerships and engagement are important components.
- Monitoring and evaluation are necessary, particularly to evaluate progress towards goals.

The Queensland Government acknowledges these principles and will use them to guide the development and delivery of recommended actions.



7. Summary of Panel recommendations

The Panel provided six overarching recommendations linked to six key objectives, and over 60 recommended actions. The six objectives and their corresponding recommendations are summarised in the graphic below.

1. A strategic and coordinated approach to koala conservation	Develop a mechanism for implementing a strategic action plan for koalas that ensures coordination across multiple levels of government, community, NGOs and industry to achieve the long-term recovery and persistence of koalas in SEQ.
2. Koala habitat is protected	Simplify and strengthen the planning framework to ensure the effective and consistent long-term protection of koala habitat across SEQ and resource incentive and partnership mechanisms to protect koala habitat on private land.
3. Strategic and landscape-scale koala habitat restoration	Develop and adequately resource regulatory, incentive and partnership mechanisms to achieve strategic koala habitat restoration at landscape scales in SEQ, particularly in identified priority areas.
4. Coordinate threat reduction and koala population management	Resource and implement a new coordinated threat reduction and koala population management strategy that complements habitat protection and restoration activities, particularly in identified priority areas.
5. Strong community engagement and partnerships	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.
6. Targeted mapping, monitoring, research and reporting	Develop targeted and high quality koala habitat and 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) support policy and management decision-making; and (4) communicates trends and outcomes transparently and publicly to enhance engagement.

8. Identifying priority areas

At the core of the Panel's recommendations is the need for a more strategic and coordinated approach. This will require mechanisms to coordinate different measures to reduce threats. One of the key ways a strategic approach will be achieved is through the identification of priority areas in the landscape for koala conservation.

Priority areas will be identified by Queensland Government mapping and will be used to focus effort to deliver better outcomes. Appropriate koala conservation and habitat protection will be applied across the priority areas and will include a mix of threat reduction measures, habitat protection and restoration, and community partnerships.

The mapping will not only inform where priority areas should be, but will also identify threats, opportunities and constraints. Just as the approach to koala conservation recognises that there is no single action that is capable of conserving koala populations in SEQ, a single action will not be applied to the priority areas. Actions will be targeted across the whole, or parts, of the priority areas. Priority areas will be across rural and urban landscapes.

Implications of these priority areas for the planning framework may include the potential to broaden triggers for koala related development assessment in SEQ to ensure that development assessment is triggered when there are potential development impacts on koalas or their habitat. This will also provide certainty in the development industry. The Panel advised that the solution must be more holistic than simply focusing on the planning framework. The way we think about future development in relation to koala conservation requires fundamental changes.

9. The Panel's recommended actions and the Queensland Government response

9.1 Objective 1: A strategic and coordinated approach to koala conservation

9.1.1 Context

There are three overarching issues for koala conservation in SEQ: the strong conflict with some societal objectives such as access to housing; the complex interaction of threats and cumulative impacts; and the importance of coordination across government, the private sector and the community. A strategic and coordinated approach to koala conservation, through the strategic prioritisation of areas for investment in habitat protection, restoration and management, is needed.

9.1.2 Panel recommendation

Develop a mechanism for implementing a strategic action plan for koalas that ensures coordination across multiple levels of government, community, NGOs and industry to achieve the long-term recovery and persistence of koalas in SEQ.

Table 1. Summary of the Panel's recommended actions and the Queensland Government's response

Summary of the Panel's recommended actions	Support/ Support in Principle	Queensland Government response
Prepare a koala conservation strategy for SEQ that is informed by the recommendations in the Panel's final report. This action relates to recommendation/s: 1.2(a)	Support	The Queensland Government will prepare a new SEQ Koala Conservation Strategy that details how the Panel's recommended actions are to be achieved, and the timeframes for achieving these actions.
Identify a network of connected priority areas for koala habitat protection, restoration and management. This action relates to recommendation/s: 1.2(a) and 6.2(a)	Support	The Queensland Government will establish priority areas for koala conservation measures.
Identify targets for koala habitat and population trajectories and associated activities for areas identified. This action relates to recommendation/s: 1.2(a)	Support	The Queensland Government will establish targets for koala habitat and population trajectories, as part of the SEQ Koala Conservation Strategy.
Identify a long-term implementation and investment strategy that identifies the activities that will be undertaken and a resourcing strategy that will ensure their implementation. This action relates to recommendation/s: 1.2(a)	Support	The Queensland Government will develop an implementation and investment strategy, as part of the SEQ Koala Conservation Strategy.
Monitor and evaluate the progress towards targets and implement a mechanism to adaptively amend the Koala Conservation Strategy. This action relates to recommendation/s: 1.2(a) and 6.2(d)	Support	The Queensland Government will develop and execute a monitoring and evaluation strategy, as part of the SEQ Koala Conservation Strategy.
Appoint a Koala Advisory Council to coordinate the implementation of the Koala Conservation Strategy. This action relates to recommendation/s: 1.2(b) and 6.2(e)	Support	The Queensland Government will appoint a Koala Advisory Council to coordinate the implementation of the SEQ Koala Conservation Strategy.

9.2 Objective 2: Koala habitat is protected

9.2.1 Context

The planning framework was identified as being the primary way to protect koala habitat. Whilst the Panel was supportive of the general structure of the planning framework, it identified that it had generally been ineffective at sufficiently reducing the loss of habitat. The Panel also identified that the solution to effective koala conservation was not to be found in the planning framework alone, but had to be developed through coordinating a range of other measures to reduce threats and aid population recovery.

9.2.2 Panel recommendation

Simplify and strengthen the planning framework to ensure the effective and consistent long-term protection of koala habitat across SEQ and resource incentive and partnership mechanisms to protect koala habitat on private land.

Table 2. Summary of the Panel's recommended actions and the Queensland Government's response

Summary of the Panel's recommended actions	Support/ Support in Principle	Queensland Government response
The Queensland Government will assume responsibility of koala related planning and development issues in SEQ. This includes scope for the Queensland Government to act as the assessment manager or a referral agency, development of standard conditions, and creation of a code in the State Development Assessment Provisions (SDAP). Koala related policy amendments already made to the State Planning Policy 2017 and <i>ShapingSEQ</i> will be reviewed to identify required further work or improvements. This action relates to recommendation/s: 2.2(a) and 1.2 (a)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will strengthen state development assessment requirements to improve consistency in approach to koala habitat protection across SEQ. The Queensland Government will incorporate koala related policy in future reviews of the SPP and <i>ShapingSEQ</i>.
Reduce the number, scope and/or complexity of exemptions from development assessment and put in place a transparent system of conditional approval. This action relates to recommendation/s: 2.2(b)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will address development assessment exemptions that have an adverse impact on koala habitat.
Require the standards placed on Queensland Government developments to be consistent to those placed on private sector development. This action relates to recommendation/s: 2.2 (a)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will identify and manage inconsistencies in development standards between state and private sector development requirements for koala habitat protection.
Develop new development assessment provisions for SEQ that address clearing requirements inside and outside the urban footprint for various habitat types and broaden triggers for koala related development assessment in SEQ based on new habitat mapping. This action relates to recommendation/s: 2.2(c) and (d)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will work with stakeholders to tighten clearing requirements, inside and outside of the urban footprint, and establish appropriate assessment provisions based on new habitat mapping.
Impose biodiversity offsets for koala habitat as a condition on development approvals as a last resort only. Ensure that offsetting of residual impacts only be available for impacts that occur in the urban footprint of <i>ShapingSEQ</i> (except where a priority koala area is identified). This action relates to recommendation/s: 2.2(e)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will review the offsets framework regarding koala habitat, including how the framework is to relate to the identified koala priority areas and subject to the outcomes of the strategic assessment process. The Queensland Government will encourage the delivery of koala offsets within koala priority areas once identified through the SEQ Koala Conservation Strategy.

Summary of the Panel's recommended actions	Support/ Support in Principle	Queensland Government response
Any future expansion of the urban footprint should not occur over areas of core koala habitat (remnant and regrowth). This action relates to recommendation/s: 2.2 (f)	Support	<i>ShapingSEQ</i> includes principles to govern the future expansion of the urban footprint including preventing the expansion of the footprint into areas containing predominately matters of national or state environmental significance and the regional biodiversity network, including koala habitat. This will include consideration of any impacts on the region's ability to accommodate future growth.
Allow locally significant koala habitat, not captured by the Queensland Government mapping or within identified priority areas for koalas, to be able to be protected through local government planning schemes. This action relates to recommendation/s: 2.2 (g)	Support	The Queensland Government will work with local governments to ensure habitat not mapped by the state can be protected.
Reduce the complexity of the current planning framework by aligning the various regimes and standardising terminology. This action relates to recommendation/s: 2.2 (h)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will improve the planning framework for koala-related development to improve consistency and simplicity.
Review coordination between state departments in relation to different legislative instruments, in particular the state development assessment process and the state nature conservation system. This action relates to recommendation/s: 2.2 (i)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will review coordination between legislative instruments and processes for koala-related development.
The state's commitment to a strategic assessment with the Commonwealth EPBC Act be undertaken as soon as possible. This action relates to recommendation/s: 2.2 (j)	Support	The Queensland Government has commenced the strategic assessment process via a \$5 million funding commitment.
Develop a communication, education and extension strategy for community and business awareness and understanding of any measures. This action relates to recommendation/s: 2.2 (k)	Support	The Queensland Government will deliver a communication and education strategy to support any changes to the koala regulatory framework.
Develop and resource effective models of habitat protection, incentives and partnerships for use amongst industry and rural enterprise sectors. This action relates to recommendation/s: 2.2 (l)	Support	The Queensland Government will develop, and identify resource requirements for effective models of habitat protection for use by industry and other stakeholders.

9.3 Objective 3: Strategic and landscape-scale koala habitat restoration

9.3.1 Context

Meaningful habitat restoration is a critical management activity for the recovery of koala populations. Koala habitat can be successfully restored, with evidence that koalas can use planted habitat trees as young as six years. However, habitat restoration has to occur at a scale that results in restoration across broad landscapes and must consider other activities such as habitat protection and threat reduction.

Offsets have an important role to play in achieving habitat restoration targets, however a more strategic, region-wide approach is required to maximise the benefits to koalas.

9.3.2 Panel recommendation

Develop and adequately resource regulatory, incentive and partnership mechanisms to achieve strategic koala habitat restoration at landscape scale in SEQ, particularly in identified priority areas.

Table 3. Summary of the Panel's recommended actions and the Queensland Government's response

Summary of the Panel's recommended actions	Support/ Support in principle	Queensland Government response
Resource greater investment in habitat restoration, including targeted incentive mechanisms for habitat restoration on private land. This action relates to recommendation/s: 3.2(a)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will invest in koala habitat restoration and provide incentives to private landholders to restore koala habitat, including through the recently announced Land Restoration Fund.
Collaborate with government, NGOs and community groups to restore koala habitat in important koala conservation areas, and appoint dedicated extension officers in partnership with NGOs. This action relates to recommendation/s: 3.2(a)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will work with NGOs and community groups to restore koala habitat in important koala conservation areas. In partnership with local government, NGOs and community groups, explore opportunities to appoint dedicated extension officers.
Identify and map priority sites for koala offsets that will have the greatest long-term benefits for koalas, and amend the offset policies to deliver koala offsets in these areas. This action relates to recommendation/s: 3.2(b)	Support Support in principle	The Queensland Government will identify priority areas for the strategic placement of environmental offsets for koala habitat. The Queensland Government will investigate appropriate mechanisms, including the environmental offsets framework, to deliver koala related offsets in priority areas.
Conduct koala habitat restoration on identified State land. This action relates to recommendation/s: 3.2(a)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will restore koala habitat on state-owned land including the protected area estate.
Provide landowners and developers with greater certainty by facilitating delivery of advanced offsets and providing for the delivery of Direct Benefit Management Plans in priority areas. This action relates to recommendation/s: 3.2(b)	Support	The Queensland Government will allow Direct Benefit Management Plans to be delivered for koala habitat offsets, including within priority areas. The Queensland Government will facilitate advanced offsets for koala habitat.

Summary of the Panel's recommended actions	Support/ Support in principle	Queensland Government response
Improved transparency and cost-effectiveness for developing offsets, including the reduction of unnecessary red tape, and improved transparency for enforcement and monitoring of offsets. This action relates to recommendation/s: 3.2(b)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will consider barriers to the delivery of offsets, cost effectiveness, enforcement, monitoring and transparent delivery as part of its review of the offsets framework and strategic assessment. The Queensland Government will identify unnecessary barriers to the delivery, enforcement and monitoring of offsets, and increase transparency and cost effectiveness in offset delivery.
Encourage financial settlement offsets to remove complexity and increase offset delivery in strategic locations. This action relates to recommendation/s: 3.2(b)	Support	The Queensland Government will improve financial settlement offsets for koala habitat and remove unnecessary complexities associated with offset delivery as part of its review of the offsets framework and strategic assessment.
Work with local and state landholders and offset providers for cost effective offset delivery priority areas. This action relates to recommendation/s: 3.2(b)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will work with local landholders, state landholders and offset providers to deliver cost effective koala related offsets.
Improved communication between state and local governments regarding koala offset delivery. This action relates to recommendation/s 3.2(b) (vi)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will work with partners to design and implement a new system to improve coordination, reporting and monitoring.

9.4 Objective 4: Coordinated threat reduction and koala population management

9.4.1 Context

To increase population densities, it is critical to protect and actively manage koala populations and not to allow koalas to be lost where there are prospects for protecting and securing their future. Effective conservation measures must be holistic and multi-faceted as there is no single action that will conserve koala populations on its own. Koalas in SEQ are simultaneously affected by multiple threats, particularly in urban areas, therefore only addressing a single threat is unlikely to be successful in recovering koala populations.

9.4.2 Panel recommendation

Resource and implement a new coordinated threat reduction and population management strategy that complements habitat protection and restoration activities, particularly in identified priority areas.

Table 4. Summary of the Panel's recommended actions and the Queensland Government's response

Summary of the Panel's recommended actions	Support/ Support in principle	Queensland Government response
Identify threats to koalas in the next phase of the 'Spatial modelling and planning for koalas in SEQ' project, and identify priority areas for investment in threat reduction. This action relates to recommendation/s: 4.2 (a) and (b)	Support	The Queensland Government will use spatial modelling to identify threats to koalas and priority areas for threat reduction.
Resource a targeted and transparent threat reduction program, in partnership with key stakeholders, based on the priority areas for a range of threat reductions mechanisms, such as retrofitting existing roads. This action relates to recommendation/s: 4.2(c)	Support	The Queensland Government will deliver a targeted and transparent threat reduction program and evaluate initiatives including the retrofitting of existing roads.
Identify suitable areas of empty habitat for koala reintroductions. This action relates to recommendation/s: 4.2(f)	Support	The Queensland Government will identify areas of empty koala habitat and reintroduce koalas where appropriate.
Amend the Koala Conservation Plan to adopt best practice techniques for translocation, and the release of rehabilitated koalas under redefined criteria, and amend restrictions for the release of captive bred koalas into the wild. This action relates to recommendation/s: 4.2(d) and (e)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will prepare a new Koala Conservation Strategy consistent with best practice management for translocation, release of rehabilitation koalas, and the release of captive bred koalas.
Integrate zoo-based koala populations into the management of wild populations through supporting stud books and engaging zoos in the management of wild populations. This action relates to recommendation/s: 4.2(g)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will prepare a new Koala Conservation Strategy consistent with best practice management, including the recognition of both wild and captive koala populations.

9.5 Objective 5: Strong community engagement and partnerships

9.5.1 Context

Community and private sector engagement is important for koala conservation, including engagement with rural and regional landholders and zoos. Partnerships between the Queensland Government and stakeholder groups are needed to jointly achieve koala conservation goals.

9.5.2 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.

Table 5. Summary of the Panel's recommended actions and the Queensland Government's response

Summary of the Panel's recommended actions	Support/ Support in principle	Queensland Government response
Designate extension officers for and/or within different stakeholder groups to coordinate communication between stakeholders. This action relates to recommendation/s: 5.2 (b)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will develop a communication, education and extension strategy. This strategy will give consideration to an extension officer program.
Deliver state-wide engagement campaigns and enable knowledge exchange through a multi-faceted communications strategy. This action relates to recommendation/s: 5.2 (c) and (d)	Support	The Queensland Government will develop a communication, education and extension strategy.
Recognise the importance of koalas to Traditional Owner communities and engage with Traditional Owners to utilise their support and knowledge. This action relates to recommendation/s: 5.2(a)	Support	The Queensland Government will develop a communication, education and extension strategy in consultation with Traditional Owners. The strategy will recognise the importance of koalas to Traditional Owner communities and outline a strategy for engagement with Traditional Owner communities.
Encourage active community participation through citizen science and field activities. This action relates to recommendation/s: 5.2(e)	Support	The Queensland Government will develop a communication, education and extension strategy. The strategy will include citizen science and field activity programs.

9.6 Objective 6: Targeted mapping, monitoring, research, and reporting

9.6.1 Context

Successful conservation policy is supported by appropriate and reliable information. There are three areas that form the basis of good koala information management: habitat and threat mapping, ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and research.

9.6.2 Panel recommendation

Develop targeted and high quality koala habitat and 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) support policy and management decision-making; and 4) communicate trends and outcomes transparently and publicly to enhance engagement.

Table 6. Summary of the Panel's recommended actions and the Queensland Government's response

Summary of the Panel's recommended actions	Support/ Support in principle	Queensland Government response
Develop consistent mapping of koala habitat across SEQ and implement a mechanism for updating the mapping over time. This action relates to recommendation/s: 6.2(a)	Support	The Queensland Government will continue to develop and update koala habitat mapping.
Use new Queensland Government koala habitat mapping as the basis for identifying priority areas and broaden triggers for development assessment This action relates to recommendation/s: 6.2 (a), 1.2(ii) and 2.2(c)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will apply the habitat mapping to the development of priority areas and development assessment provisions.
Develop: (1) broad-scale assessment tools to measure the extent and condition of koala habitat; and (2) ground-based rapid habitat assessment tools that can be integrated to provide statistics on trends and metrics on condition of koala habitat across SEQ. This action relates to recommendation/s: 6.2(b)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will develop tools to assess koala habitat condition.
Develop a consistent approach to mapping threats to koalas across SEQ and implement a systematic mechanism for updating this mapping to track changes in threats over time that will guide the selection of priority areas. This action relates to recommendation/s: 6.2(c) and 4.2 (a)	Support	The Queensland Government will develop a consistent approach to mapping threats to koalas.
Develop a comprehensive koala monitoring program that explicitly evaluates and communicates progress towards koala conservation targets and evaluates policy and management success. This action relates to recommendation/s: 6.2(d) and 1.2(a)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will develop a monitoring and evaluation strategy, as part of the SEQ Koala Conservation Strategy.
Encourage multi-disciplinary research that explicitly addresses key management and policy questions and the development of partnerships between researchers, the Queensland Government and other end-users. Explore mechanisms to enhance the effectiveness of research through leveraging funding. This action relates to recommendation/s: 6.2(f) and (g)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will develop a fully costed implementation plan, as part of the SEQ Koala Conservation Strategy. The strategy will include directions for multi-disciplinary research and mechanisms for funding.
Run a koala conference every 5 years that brings together researchers, policy makers and planners. This action relates to recommendation/s: 6.2 (h)	Support in principle	The Queensland Government will develop a communication, education and extension strategy. The strategy will include a koala conference.

10. Recommendations for the rest of Queensland

The Queensland Government acknowledges that the model underpinning the Panel's recommendations for SEQ is capable of extension to other regions of Queensland. State-wide approaches to koala conservation will vary between, and within, regions depending on local circumstances. Following development of a regulatory response to koala conservation in SEQ, further consideration will be given to extending this approach to other parts of the state with koala populations.



