



Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef Minister for Science and Youth Affairs

Your Ref: A657398
Our Ref: CTS 03545/21

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24 March 2021

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 25 February 2021 enclosing Parliamentary Petition No. 3408-20 concerning koala habitat protection. The Queensland Government is committed to maintaining a viable and healthy koala population in Queensland.

In response to evidence of a decline in south east Queensland's koala population, the Queensland Government released the *South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2020–2025* (the Strategy) on 29 August 2020. The Strategy is available on the Department of Environment and Science's website at: <https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/wildlife/animals/living-with/koalas/conservation/seq-koala-strategy>.

The Strategy outlines the Queensland Government's response to the recommendations of the Koala Expert Panel on the most appropriate and realistic actions to address the decline, and ensure the future, of koala populations in the wild across south east Queensland.

The Strategy reflects input from thousands of Queenslanders and takes a coordinated and collaborative approach to habitat protection, restoration and threat mitigation. The actions under the Strategy are complemented by amendments to the koala conservation planning framework introduced on 7 February 2020, resulting in the strongest koala habitat protections Queensland has ever seen. The effectiveness of this framework will be assessed in a post-implementation review in 2023.

The planning framework is supported by state-of-the-art koala habitat mapping. The mapped koala habitat represents the best habitat for koalas, based on the combination of biophysical measures (including climate), suitable vegetation and koala occurrence records. This approach will allow the koala habitat mapping to be updated and refined annually.

The Petition makes reference to specific exemptions under the Planning Regulation 2017. The development control plan exemption provides that past decisions, made in accordance with the legislative requirements in force at the time, cannot be reassessed under current legislation.

State government supported infrastructure development, while exempt from the koala conservation planning requirements of the Planning Regulation 2017, is guided by the principles of the State Government Supported Infrastructure Koala Conservation Policy, available on the department's website at: https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0031/88474/comm-infrastructure.pdf.

A review of this Policy is underway which will contemporise the approach to planning and development of Government infrastructure to align with the koala habitat mapping and Government policy settings on the protection and restoration of koala habitat.

With regard to the conservation status of the koala, the species is listed as vulnerable to extinction under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and the Queensland *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

These listings are based on the nationally adopted Common Assessment Method and reviews data on koala populations against criteria established by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Further information can be found on the department's website at <https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/wildlife/threatened-species/reclassification-process>.

I trust that this information has been of assistance to the petitioners.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Meaghan Scanlon', written over a horizontal line.

Meaghan Scanlon MP

Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef

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