

ERRATUM

Minister: Meaghan Scanlon MP – Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef,
Minister for Science and Youth Affairs

Document: **Response to Petition no. 3378-20**

Tabled: 4 January 2021

Action: Please table attached letter, which contains identical text to the letter tabled on 4 January 2021, but corrects the underlying Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) ensuring the hyperlinks embedded within the letter access the intended Uniform Resource Locator (URL) web pages.



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

Our Ref: CTS 24544/20
Your Ref: A628293

1 William Street Brisbane Qld 4000
GPO Box 5078 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3719 7140
Email environment@ministerial.qld.gov.au

24 DEC 2020

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 27 November 2020 regarding Parliamentary Petition No. 3378-20 concerning koala protection in South East Queensland (SEQ).

The Palaszczuk Government is committed to maintaining a viable and healthy koala population in Queensland. In response to evidence of a decline in the State's koala population, the Government undertook a review of SEQ's koala conservation policies and management actions, led by an independent Koala Expert Panel. The Government committed to implement all of the Panel's recommendations and released the *South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2020–2025* (the Strategy) on 29 August 2020.

The Strategy contains actions responding to the Panel's recommendations with a program of 46 actions to be implemented across SEQ that take a coordinated and collaborative approach to habitat protection, restoration and threat mitigation. It was developed in consultation with the Koala Advisory Council and reflects input from thousands of Queenslanders who contributed to the consultation on the draft document. The Strategy is available on the Department of Environment and Science's (DES) website.

Work has already begun with the introduction of amendments to the koala conservation planning framework, resulting in the strongest koala habitat protections Queensland has ever seen. This framework, which commenced on 7 February 2020, provides increased protection for koala habitat in SEQ by increasing both the size and level of protections for koala habitat areas compared with the State's previous regulatory framework.

Koala habitat areas (including both core koala habitat areas and locally refined koala habitat areas (LRKHA)) now cover 716,266 hectares of land across SEQ. Of this, 330,660 hectares, including 9,938 hectares within the SEQ Urban Footprint, falls within koala priority areas in which the clearing of koala habitat areas is prohibited by the Queensland Government, subject to certain exemptions. These exemptions balance protecting koala habitat with the need to allow some clearing for limited development and allow for essential services such as activities relating to emergency situations, the removal of dangerous trees and the creation and maintenance of firebreaks adjacent to infrastructure.

Since the release of the koala habitat map and conservation protections in February 2020, some local governments have sought additional areas to be included within the State mapping. In response, the Queensland Herbarium has assessed these requests and produced updated high value regrowth mapping data, based on high resolution imagery. The update to the LRKHA map (mapping Version 1.1) in SEQ is an interim measure to provide greater protections alongside the release of the Strategy.

The recently identified areas of LRKHA are likely to transition to core koala habitat through the 2021 annual map update, as areas meet the Queensland Government's core koala habitat methodology.

DES is working with local governments in SEQ to address the Panel's recommendation that local governments protect koala habitat not mapped and protected by the State. This may lead to further areas of habitat, including scattered or isolated trees, being protected under local planning schemes as matters of local environmental significance for biodiversity.

The Queensland Government is committed to safeguarding koala habitat by avoiding the expansion of the Urban Footprint into areas that predominately contain koala habitat. The Urban Footprint principles contained in *ShapingSEQ - South East Queensland Regional Plan 2017* seek to exclude areas predominantly containing environmental matters of national or state environmental significance and the regional biodiversity network, including koala habitat, and ensures 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.

If landholders, including those in the Urban Footprint, are concerned that the new koala habitat mapping does not accurately capture the koala habitat that currently exists on their property, they may apply to the chief executive responsible for the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (NC Act) to make, amend or revoke koala habitat area mapping on their land. Additionally, the Government is developing a pathway for both local governments and the community to submit information to be considered in the annual update of the koala habitat map. Further information on this process is available at:

<https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/wildlife/animals/living-with/koalas/mapping/koalamaps>.

In 2012, the koala was listed as vulnerable to extinction across Queensland under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and under the Queensland NC Act in 2015. As the species occurs across multiple jurisdictions, the Commonwealth Government is the lead jurisdiction under the Common Assessment Method (CAM) to assess a reclassification nomination. The CAM aims to provide a nationally consistent approach to assessing and listing threatened species across Australian jurisdictions. Further information on the assessment process can be found at: <https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/wildlife/threatened-species/reclassification-process>.

The Toondah Harbour Priority Development Area (PDA) is regulated under the Toondah Harbour PDA Development Scheme (Scheme). The Scheme requires that all assessable development in the Toondah Harbour PDA is designed and sited with regard to the natural environment and that impacts on Matters of State Environmental Significance, including koala habitat, are at first avoided, then minimised and mitigated. The Scheme seeks to achieve a net gain in koala and marine habitat through the use of compensatory offsets.

I am advised that a master planned redevelopment proposal, led by the Walker Group, in the Toondah Harbour PDA is currently in the process of undertaking an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Report. This process commenced in October 2019 and is being led by the Walker Group. It is expected to take the Walker Group 12 to 18 months to complete the technical reporting required for the EIS, including a detailed assessment of any likely impact on koalas. It will then be submitted to the Commonwealth Government for assessment under the EPBC Act, which will include a public submission period. Following this, the Walker Group will then be required to obtain state environment and planning approvals. There will be opportunities for community engagement throughout this process. Further information on the EIS process can be found at: https://www.recland.qld.gov.au/info/20271/priority_development_areas/287/toondah_harbour_pda.

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

Yours sincerely



Meaghan Scanlon MP

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