

Koala conservation - offsets



Introduction

Environmental offsets are sometimes used to compensate for impacts of development upon significant environmental values (such as the habitat of protected species, like the koala).

An impact on one site is counterbalanced by securing land at another site, and restoring or managing that land to replace the environmental values lost on the first site.

In Queensland, environmental offsets may be required as a condition on a development approval, for matters of state, national or local significance, under various laws. At the state level, the framework for offsets is established by the [Environmental Offsets Act 2014](#).

An 'avoid, mitigate, offset' approach underpins Queensland's offsets framework. This means that developers are obliged to try to avoid or mitigate the environmental impact in the first instance.

For more information on environmental offsets, see the [Queensland Environmental Offsets Policy](#) or contact the team at offsets@des.qld.gov.au.

Offsets for koalas

When are they required?

Offsets may be required for significant residual impacts upon prescribed environmental matters, where the planning rules allow this as a condition on a development.

There are three prescribed environmental matters that relate to koalas in South East Queensland (SEQ):

- areas mapped as a koala habitat area identified under the Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2017
- essential habitat for the koala, under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*
- areas which are not mapped but contain, or are likely to contain, koalas.

Offsets may be required under the new State Code 25 – Development in South East Queensland koala habitat areas – as well as through other state codes or legislation.

The [Significant Residual Impact Guidelines](#) outline what is considered a significant impact for each prescribed environmental matter under Queensland legislation.

For koalas in SEQ, the removal of a non-juvenile koala habitat tree is a significant impact.

How is the size of a koala offset calculated?

The Queensland Environmental Offsets Policy requires three new koala habitat trees to be established for every non-juvenile koala habitat tree removed in SEQ.

For financial settlement offsets, the value of the payment is calculated based on the local government area and bioregion of the impact, and the area of impact in hectares. For koala habitat in SEQ an average tree density of 250 trees per hectare is assumed.

Where are they located?

The Queensland Environmental Offsets Policy includes information on where environmental offsets should be located, including that the offset should be delivered in the same local government area as the impact.

Chapter 2A of the policy outlines a hierarchy where environmental offsets for koala habitat should be located, in line with the Queensland Government's objectives under the South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy.

Ideally, koala habitat offsets should be located in an area identified as a koala habitat restoration area, within the Koala Priority Area that is closest to the impact site (Figure 1).

Where this is not possible, the offset should be located in:

- an area identified as a restoration area in the next closest Koala Priority Area, or
- an area identified as a restoration area as close as possible to a Koala Priority Area and the impact site, or
- as close as possible to the impact site, where the offset site contains habitat suitable for restoration; will create or improve connectivity between koala habitat or Koala Priority Areas; can be protected from koala threats, and secured for the duration of the impact – usually in perpetuity.

How do I find out where offsets are being delivered?

The Queensland Government maintains a register of offsets – it can be found by visiting the [Queensland Government website](http://www.qld.gov.au/seqkoalas).

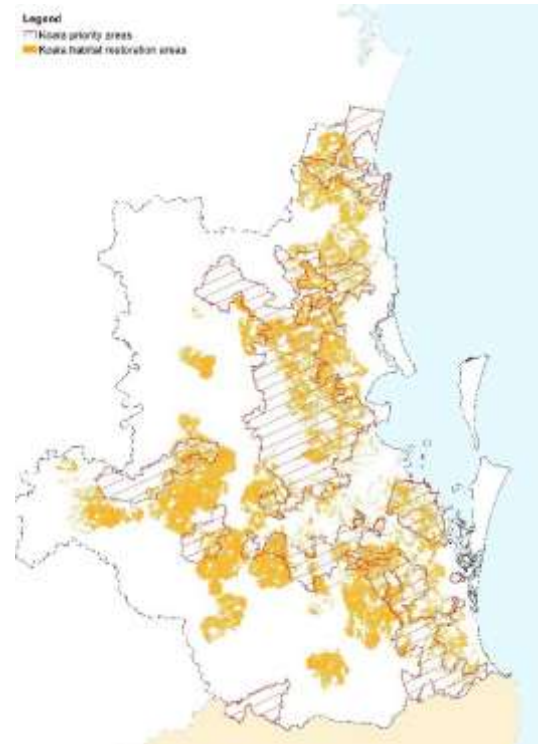


Figure 1: Koala Priority Areas and Koala Habitat Restoration Areas

How are offsets protected?

Legal security is generally required for environmental offsets.

The *Environmental Offsets Act 2014* outlines how an environmental offset may be legally secured. The legal security mechanism used may vary depending on the environmental values being impacted, and the tenure of the land where the offset will be located.

Further information

The Queensland Government has released fact sheets to support the new koala conservation protections and South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy. For these and more information about the Queensland Government's koala-related initiatives, visit www.qld.gov.au/seqkoalas