

Koala Advisory Council Communique

March 2019

The second meeting of the Koala Advisory Council (the Council) was held in Brisbane on 12 March 2019.

The meeting opened with a presentation of data from the wildlife hospitals on koala admissions. Trends in the data confirmed the numerous and real impacts koalas are facing in the region, in particular, habitat loss and threats introduced by population growth. The data also highlighted that the koala population is declining and the need for a holistic and co-ordinated Strategy that addresses the many threatening processes for koalas. The Council agreed that it would be beneficial to collate data moving forward.

The focus of this second Koala Advisory Council meeting was to discuss a preliminary draft of the South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy, which will be distributed to Council members for their review and consultation with their stakeholders. The preliminary draft Strategy will detail short and long term performance measures across the key themes of: utilising a coordinated approach, protecting and restoring koala habitat, threat reduction, strong engagement and partnerships, and improved mapping, monitoring, research and reporting. The preliminary draft strategy will also detail a proposed approach for identifying and managing priority areas for koalas.

Council members were also shown the extent of mapping which will be used to detail where habitat protection measures are applied. The Council was advised that the mapping has been built using an evidence-based approach of the most important factors for koala persistence in the wild with additional input from several Queensland Government departments. This mapping seeks to balance koala protection including the provision of habitat connectivity and the requirements of housing and commercial development.

Further consultation with industry and local governments was recommended by the Council.

The Council also recommended increased engagement with First Nations people and that the mapping include Native Title and cultural heritage areas across the region. The Council also reaffirmed the urgency to engage with industry and local government about proposed mapping and applicable controls. The mapping will continue to be developed and consultation will occur on the final proposed version of the mapping and the government policies that will apply to specific areas.

The Council discussed the importance of more data on national parks, monitoring within national parks, and how they are managed, such as fire management.

The Council also discussed the translocation policy; more clarity on the policy was sought at the next meeting. The setting of achievable and realistic targets was also discussed and are considered to be a high priority.

The Council will now work with their stakeholders to provide feedback on the preliminary draft Strategy before the next meeting on 30 April 2019. The meeting in April will be an opportunity for the Department to provide another version of the preliminary draft Strategy that includes feedback.

Input from various groups have already commented, including LGAs and koala conservation groups, and will continue over the coming weeks.

The Chairperson has very clearly expressed the view that translocation is a key focus area ongoing.