

Koala Advisory Council Communique

December 2018

The inaugural meeting of the Koala Advisory Council was held in Brisbane on 13 December 2018. The meeting was opened by the Honourable Leeanne Enoch MP, Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts.

The Council's focus in the first year is on building networks and communication. In the longer term the emphasis will be on monitoring and evaluating progress against the outcomes that will be included in the Koala Conservation Strategy, including the opportunity to provide expertise for continuous improvement. As such, the first meeting's focus was on identifying inputs that Council members can make towards the development of a Koala Conservation Strategy. This input includes representing the views of the Council member's stakeholders. The Koala Conservation Strategy will describe how the Koala Expert Panel's recommendations will be implemented across strategic priority areas, such as habitat protection, habitat restoration threat abatement, and mapping, monitoring and research.

There will be some work to do before the Koala Conservation Strategy is released in May 2019, and the Department of Environment and Science will be progressing this work based on inputs received from the Koala Advisory Council today, the Council discussed how a more coordinated approach can be undertaken with all stakeholders, including Councils and NGOs in key areas, to provide information in a common and coordinated format that will feed directly into the foundations of the strategy. There was also considerable interest from the Council on identifying opportunities for koala habitat from the Land Restoration Fund.

The first tasks from the Council's meeting are to work with the Local Government Association of Queensland to consider alignment with koala protection measures already in place at a local government level, and to consider local government knowledge and data that can further inform koala habitat mapping and the identification of priority areas for habitat protection and restoration. The Council will also work with Traditional Owner Groups to incorporate the cultural importance of koalas to Traditional Owners and their knowledge in planning and caring for koala country, and hold a Roundtable on threat abatement measures to utilise local knowledge to identify both threat hot spots and the most appropriate mitigation measure.

The Council also recognised the importance of ongoing discussions with industry and the community to ensure the Koala Conservation Strategy strikes an appropriate balance between the continued population growth expected in SEQ and strengthened protections for koalas.

The Chairperson has very clearly expressed the view that "this Council should ensure accurate timely advice flows for all stakeholders into the strategy process early to ensure there is ownership from the Council as a whole and the stakeholders around the table."

A further two meetings of the Koala Advisory Council are planned before May 2019, with further working group meetings to occur on specific issues.