



Office of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads

Our ref: PP1920-12 / PP1967-12

Your ref: Petitions

09 OCT 2012

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to petition numbers 1920-12 and 1967-12 lodged with the Legislative Assembly by Mr Trevor Ruthenberg MP, Member for Kallangur on 11 September 2012, about the koala and wildlife populations during the construction of the Moreton Bay Rail Link.

The Moreton Bay Rail Link project team acknowledges community concerns particularly those of local bushcare and koala rescue groups.

The project expects to remove approximately 20 000 non-juvenile koala habitat trees from the rail corridor where estimates of koala numbers range from 30 to 80 individuals.

The project team has prepared a Koala Action Plan to manage the project's impacts on the local koala population, with input from experts in koala ecology, conservation and environmental management.

The Koala Action Plan is the project's blueprint to:

- understand the current koala populations and their habitats
- identify the likely impacts of the project
- propose ways of minimising those impacts, through design, as well as providing a suite of offsets
- develop Fauna Management and Tree Clearing strategies to safeguard koalas during construction.

The project has provided opportunities for local environment groups to be informed about the plan and share their local knowledge about the koala population. The team will continue to keep wildlife welfare groups informed. Some clearing has been undertaken at Mango Hill with the Fauna Management and Tree Clearing strategy for that area implemented successfully.

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Since the development of the project's Koala Action Plan in May 2012, some elements have subsequently been subject to further consideration by both the Department of Transport and Main Roads and the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection.

- There are reviews being undertaken by both departments to examine the legislation and policies governing offsets for loss of koala habitat. Nevertheless, work to identify suitable offset sites is continuing in conjunction with both the department and Moreton Bay Regional Council.
- There is also a review of the department's obligations and agreements with regard to management of the environment impacted by its activities.

The proposal that selected individuals be relocated from the project rail corridor has been discussed both among the project's experts and with environment stakeholders. It is widely recognised by all parties that populations of koalas in many parts of South East Queensland are facing unprecedented pressure from disease, loss of habitat and encroaching urban development with associated mortality from dog attacks and vehicle strikes.

Relocation is currently considered on a case by case basis and although there are case studies which demonstrate the value of this strategy, there are many factors involved in maximising the likelihood of success. At this stage, in line with current legislation, the project is not considering relocation of selected individuals.

The government is committed to the conservation of koalas. The Moreton Bay Rail Link project will demonstrate that commitment in action by working with appropriate departments, koala ecologists and conservationists and wildlife rescue organisations to achieve the best possible balance of outcomes for wildlife and the local community.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Emerson', written in a cursive style.

Scott Emerson MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads