

Mr N Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
Legislative Assembly of Queensland  
Parliament House  
Alice and George Streets  
BRISBANE Q 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 27 November 2003 forwarding a copy of a petition tabled in the Parliament on 26 November 2003 regarding the request for wildlife warning signs in the Redland Shire.

In March 2003, the Premier and I announced the preparation of a Koala Conservation Plan. This will be a statutory plan with potentially broad ranging regulatory provisions. It will be a vital part of the Government's framework for koala protection and will complement existing tools such as the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*. The Koala Conservation Plan will provide an additional suite of legal tools to protect koalas and their habitat. If there is an inconsistency between a Conservation Plan and a planning scheme, the Conservation Plan will prevail. The Koala Conservation Plan will require local government to be more accountable in ensuring that koalas and their habitat are protected and conserved.

On 2 September 2003, I announced the reclassification of the conservation status of the koala after the Scientific Advisory Committee recommended it be listed as regionally vulnerable. I have accepted this listing recommendation and have requested that officers from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) progress the necessary legislative amendments. The recommendation from the Scientific Advisory Committee was based on independent information from scientists, and recognises that although koalas are still common as a species, they are vulnerable in certain areas. This recommendation recognises that koala populations were declining in southeast Queensland and facing significant threats, principally from loss of habitat.

The review of the conservation status of koalas was one of the strategies in the State Government's campaign to develop a more comprehensive, authoritative and state-wide approach to koala conservation.

The listing of the koala as “regionally vulnerable” does not directly change the role of local government in land planning and development issues. It is expected that local governments generally will have due regard to the conservation of all species when dealing with environmental assessment and planning issues. Councils are, of course, expected to have greater concern for ‘Vulnerable’ species as opposed to those listed as ‘Common’.

The reclassification of the koala will raise awareness of the need to consider koala conservation values when assessing developments, and where uncertainty exists on the impacts of a proposal it may result in more referrals to the EPA for comment.

In the Redland Shire, the local authority has long recognised traffic as a problem for wildlife. In the past, numerous warning signs have been erected within known koala areas. These signs highlight the fact koalas are in the area. Research in 1990’s confirmed the need to reduce the speed of vehicles if we are to save koala lives.

In what is an Australian first, the installation of “koala zone” signs on roads which have a high koala death rate has been undertaken as a joint initiative between the State Government, through the Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS) and Main Roads Departments in conjunction with Redland Shire Council with the signs appearing on selected roads in the Shire. Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service koala records were used to identify sections of roads that have an unacceptably high number of koala deaths.

The Redland Shire makes up over half the area identified as the Koala Coast under the State Planning Policy 1/97 – Conservation of koalas in the Koala Coast. To ensure that the Shire’s koala population is maintained into the future, the Redland Shire Council has developed the **Koala Conservation and Management Policy and Strategy**. The Queensland Government considers that the extensive koala habitat areas in the Koala Coast should be conserved to allow for the long-term survival of the koala population. Important koala habitat should be protected from inappropriate future developments and changes in land use, without affecting existing uses and development rights or removing development commitments.

This State Planning Policy addresses planning issues concerning the conservation of koalas (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) and their habitat in the Koala Coast. The Policy is administered by the Department of Local Government and Planning, with the Department of Environment providing technical advice and information on conserving koala habitat. Local governments, the Planning and Environment Court, and the Queensland Government are required to have regard to this Policy when carrying out their planning functions. The Policy will be implemented through the preparation, review, amendment and implementation of planning schemes for the City of Brisbane, the City of Logan and Redland Shire. The Policy must also be considered when making decisions on development applications, although it does not apply to those applications seeking only a building or plumbing/drainage approval.

As there is a Koala Coast agreement with Redland Shire Council with QPWS a lot of land is managed by Council, and Council would take an active role in erecting this type of signage.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

**DEAN WELLS**  
**Minister for Environment**