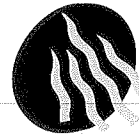




Hon Andrew McNamara MP
Member for Hervey Bay



**Queensland
Government**

**Minister for Sustainability,
Climate Change and Innovation**

20 MAY 2008

Neil Laurie
The Clerk of Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 16 April 2008 concerning E-Petition Number 974-07 regarding the decline of the Koala Coast koala population and seeking the protection of koala habitat in rural and urban areas.

As the Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation, I am responsible for the conservation of Queensland's native wildlife and it is a responsibility that I take seriously. I share the concerns being raised for the future of the koala in the Koala Coast region, particularly given the recent koala population survey results released by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as highlighted. I reiterated these concerns at the Redland Koala Summit in November 2007 and pledged at that time, that the State Government would do all it can to ensure the long-term sustainability of koalas in the wild. I also made it very clear that we need the community and local government to assist us in this process if we are to succeed.

The Queensland Government listed the koala as a 'vulnerable' species under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* in 2004 and in support of this introduced the *Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan and Management Program 2006-2016* (the Koala Plan) on 2 October 2006.

The Koala Plan is a major initiative of the Queensland Government to increase protection for koalas across Queensland. The Koala Plan focuses on addressing development and land use planning in koala habitat areas within the South East Queensland region, as well as introduces statutory requirements for clearing koala habitat trees, such as koala spotters and sequential clearing. The Koala Plan works in concert with other regulatory initiatives, such as the South East Queensland Regional Plan, to provide a balance whereby the human population of the region can co-exist with a viable koala population.

Koala habitat areas are being protected and enhanced through the EPA's concurrence jurisdiction to approve or refuse development in koala habitat (Koala Conservation and Koala Sustainability Areas) identified by the *South-east Queensland Regional Plan 2005-2026*. Urban koala areas are also being dealt with under the Koala Plan through the mapping of Urban Koala Areas and requiring development to incorporate koala sensitive design.

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The EPA is also involved in a number of other measures to protect koalas and koala habitat in the Koala Coast such as working closely with local governments to ensure the protection of existing bushland and connectivity of habitat in urban areas through planning documents such as the Local Growth Management Strategies. A key element is seeking to reduce pressure on the bushland and rural areas by consolidating urban growth and infrastructure. The EPA is also implementing a Koala Community Engagement Program to increase the community's awareness of the threats on koalas and provide them with the means to make a difference, for example, by educating them on how to be responsible dog owners.

The Government's existing legislation and management program for koalas is already consistent with the requirements of section 14 of the *Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 2006*, which specifies the management intent for endangered species and acts similar to a recovery plan by identifying the threats to the species and putting in place actions to address these.

To maximise koala conservation efforts at this time I believe it appropriate to direct available resources to rigorously implementing the Koala Plan and to allow a reasonable time for it to take effect. The Government is then committed to undertaking a review of the Koala Plan after two years of implementation where the effectiveness of these measures can be considered.

Yours sincerely



Andrew McNamara MP
Minister for Sustainability,
Climate Change and Innovation