

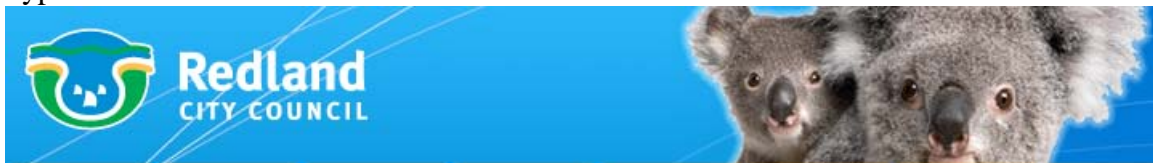
Senate Inquiry: Status, health and sustainability of Australia's koala population.

The koala is arguably second only to the kangaroo in its iconic status in Australia and overseas. Its image immediately speaks of Australia.

At local government and State government levels the management and protection of the koala has been appalling across the Koala Coast area of SE QLD. Although supposed protective legislation is constantly being reviewed and updated there are so many loopholes that nothing has stopped koala numbers plummeting.

Clearly, whatever it is that is in place now, is not working. Protective measures restricting development at local level are often reversed at State level. State legislation exempts domestic development from the protective legislation. A national strategy that comprehensively protects the koala is urgently needed and this is the listing of the koala as critically endangered under the EPBC Act.

In our local government area the koala is used for tourism promotions and its outline image is incorporated the corporate logo. This use amounts to nothing more than hypocritical tokenism.



There is a huge body of knowledge about koala habitat, feeding habits and the area of land required to sustain a viable population. Many koalas inhabit large bushland areas but there are also many who have so far continued to successfully live in an urban environment. To date they have moved between parks, suburban bushland, creek areas and gardens to reach their food trees. They have done this because historically gardens were large, contained trees and had low fencing of timber or wire mesh. Koalas roamed with little interruption to their habitual pathways. The urban environment forms an essential part of the urban koala's habitat and is as important as the food trees themselves. Our suburban gardens are needed to provide the link between the larger feeding areas.

In recent years things have changed dramatically. The politically driven population push has caused the subdivision of blocks with consequent removal of trees and open space, reducing gardens to metre wide perimeter strips around buildings. Fencing now focuses on privacy and the reduction of traffic noise. Preferred styles are concrete walls, solid timber palings or colorbond sheeting, all 1.8m high. This solid fencing is a barrier to koala movement and breaks the linkages across their habitat causing the isolation of populations from their food source which in turn leads to slow starvation.

I have lived in a street with a transient koala population for 26 years but their numbers are diminishing and their breeding rate cannot keep pace with tree felling, fence building and road fatalities.

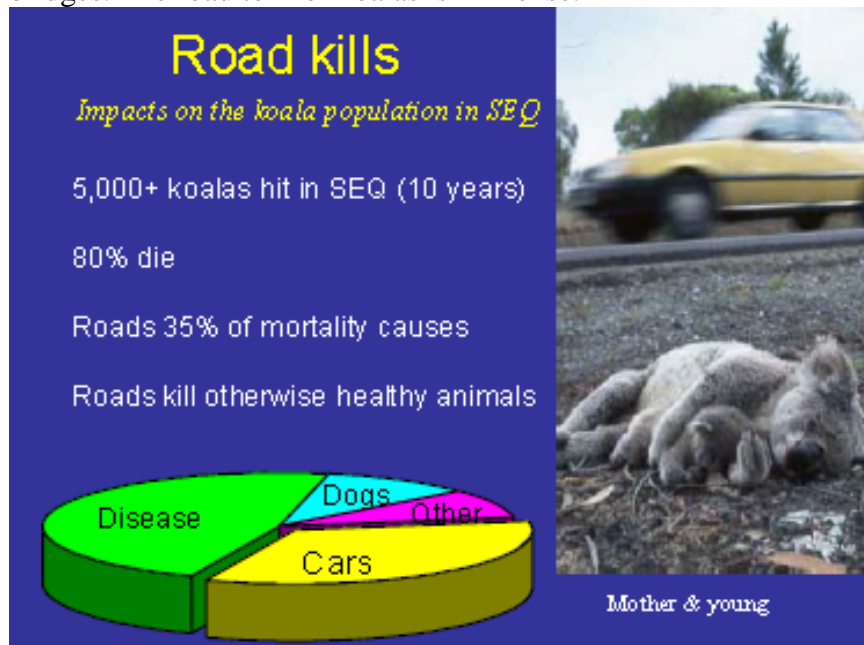
Redland City Council may protect trees on suburban blocks with koala overlays but there is no blanket overlay throughout the City so tree protection is piecemeal through patchy

overlays and individual tree protection orders. Over-riding this protection though is a householders right to fell any tree within 10 metres of a building or 3 metres of a boundary without reference to Council. In an urban environment most trees are within this 10 metre / 3 metre distance. So in reality none are protected; every single tree is vulnerable.

My own local area has a Save Mary Street Group (www.savemaryst.com.au) that has been fighting State and local government for a year now. Our aim was to limit building projects and manage fencing to preserve a known koala corridor. We have failed miserably. The State Government has erected a block of social housing units in the middle of the koala movement area. Redland City Council has failed to control barrier fencing around a suburban block through which koalas used to move. Our koala population is now cut off from a major feeding area and soon will starve to death.

Local government regulations have koala habitat overlays in place supposedly to protect koalas but these do not include the control of fencing styles and even the new Queensland State Government koala protection legislation exempts domestic building activity from its regulations. It is domestic building activity that is wiping out the urban koala population.

Roads are being built through habitat and across linkages without the necessary wildlife bridges. The road toll for koalas is immense.



The Koala Coast:
Koala deaths and vehicles
Mother & young

210+ koalas p.a.
State-roads
1/3 female
75 ♀ – 750 offspring lost
This road kills 18 koalas/year

Habitat use & roads

- Daily home range use
- Not *just* dispersal
- Koalas need to cross the road every 200m
- All koalas captured on reserve side of road
- Residents v dispersing animals (different)
- No sense of road danger
- Population now approaching effective extinction

Daily home-range movements result in frequent crossing of roads
Need for multiple koala crossing points

from Harriet Preece DERM QLD

We have the information – we know what is happening – yet we do nothing.

So we have layers and layers of legislation that effectively does nothing to save this species. The community is also lulled into a false sense of security believing that the legislation in place is protecting the species – it is not.

There is no indication from local experience that the National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy is anything other than a guidance document that does not translate into any effective action.

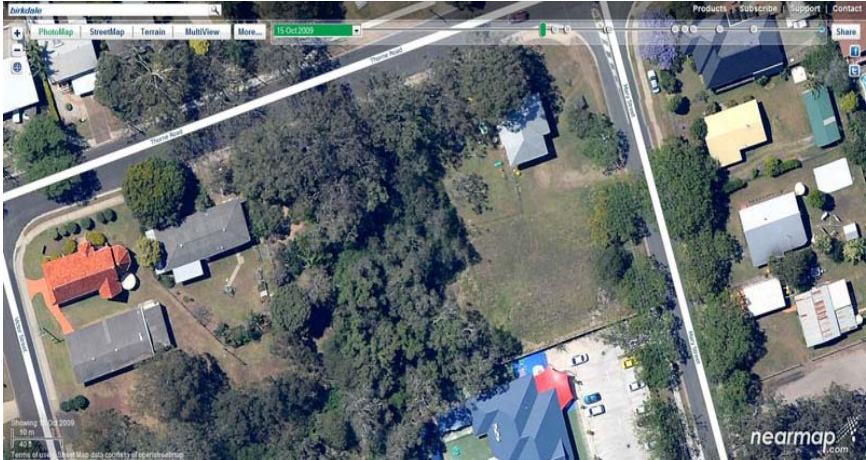
State and local government legislation is spectacularly failing to preserve the koala. Unless the koala is listed as critically endangered at Federal level it is destined to follow the Tasmanian tiger.

The koala of the Koala Coast in SE Queensland must be listed as critically endangered to allow protection to be put in place that over-rides ineffective State and local government legislation and prevents this precious animal from the all-consuming urban sprawl.

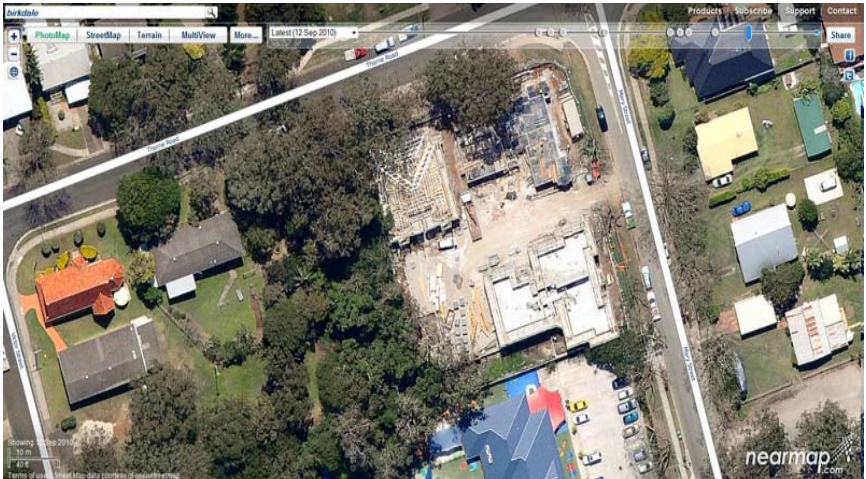
The following photographs show the destruction of a local koala corridor in one suburb of one local council area. This damage is being repeated over and over again, suburb by suburb; street by street.



Koala Corridors - Mary Street Birkdale 4159 Qld. State Government building site at vital linkage point.



Mary St before construction – koalas need open areas to move between food trees.



Mary St during construction – koala access blocked.



Koala movement patterns between food trees are well known.

24 Jan 2011 – Mary St – Thorne Rd site.

Stress to koalas suppresses their immune system and triggers disease.
Excavator parked below a tree containing 2 koalas.



Months of protests and negotiations with Government failed to stop or modify this project sufficiently to protect the koala corridor – see www.savemaryst.com .



This is a male breeding koala in a Thorne Road suburban garden, Birkdale Qld; Redland City Council area. He will starve to death because he can no longer roam across his feeding range.



Koala & joey moving between trees around the building site using a footpath alongside a busy road. The joey separated from its mother soon after this photo was taken and was killed by a car as it tried to cross the street. The local community has lobbied Redland City Council to slow traffic in this street, with no result.



A female breeding koala negotiating the building site at Mary Street Birkdale Qld. She will starve to death because she can no longer reach her food trees further along the corridor.



Koala movements are well known to the local community. This corridor has now been severed by development at Mary St corner and in the top centre of the photo by further fencing and construction – see below.

Thorne Road opposite State Government building site at Mary Street – blocks are fenced and construction commences. Food trees at the extreme left of the photo and those in the distance are separated by the fencing which forms a barrier to koalas and isolates the population from a major part of its food source.



Building and fencing across a known koala corridor, referred to in a local report as a 'koala hot spot'. Redland City Council reports that they have no powers to intervene to protect the koala corridor.

It is not a lack of knowledge that is endangering our koalas – it is the lack of will to protect them.

Clearly existing legislation and policies are not protecting the koala. The koala of the Koala Coast in SE Queensland must be listed as critically endangered under the EPBC Act.

Margaret Hardy