



From the Mayor's Office
Melva E Hobson
Mayor of Redland City



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Contact: Office of Mayor
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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment
and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

Inquiry into the status, health and sustainability of Australia's koala population

Redland City Council is pleased that on 17 November 2010 the Senate referred the following matter onto the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications. Redland City is fortunate to have koalas living within the boundaries of the city. Redlands koala population makes up a large percentage of the Koala Coast population which includes sections of Brisbane City and Logan City. Redlands is also proud to boast the only naturally occurring island population on North Stradbroke Island.

The residents have for a long time recognised this iconic species as the faunal emblem of the city. The residents of the Redlands are proud to reside within the habitat of this species but also concerned about the viability of the population to survive in the ever increasing urbanisation of the city. The population of the koala was estimated in 1999 to be approximately 6246, in 2006 the population estimated at 4611, and in 2008 the population estimated at 2279.

Redland City Council in August 2002 endorsed the *Koala Conservation and Management Policy and Strategy* (see Appendix 1). The objective of this was to "Conserve and manage the shire's estimated population of 4000 koala in good health, where health is measured as greater than 75% of mature females breeding and less than 15% of koalas showing clinical signs of disease annually". The strategy document produced actions under 5 policy statements. Those policy statements were:

- protect, enhance and manage habitats required to maintain a stable, healthy population of koalas;
- enhance existing and improve future development and infrastructure provision to achieve outcomes compatible with koala conservation and management;
- promote and market the koala and educate the community and stakeholders, to facilitate responsibility and support for koala conservation and management;

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- achieve appropriate domestic and pest animal management which is compatible with koala conservation and management;
- encourage research into and monitoring of health, welfare and sustainability of koala populations within Redland Shire and koala coast.

In December 2005 Council undertook a review of the 2002 Koala Policy. This review found there were 56 issues and actions identified in total with Council having commenced or completed 44 of these actions.

In November 2006 another report was presented to Council with a Draft Koala Conservation and Management Policy and Strategy, developed and endorsed to be presented to the public. At this time we were still waiting for the results of the Koala population surveys being conducted by the state.

In November 2007 Council held a Koala Summit in which it was the objective to seek the views of the community in regards to koala management. Council invited a range of community stakeholders to ensure that a wider cross section of the community would be represented. It was clear that the koala population was continuing to decline and that to halt the decline would require significant changes and amendments to Council's policy and strategy. It was clear through this that the community of the Redlands wanted the koala protected. It also became apparent that the majority of the community knew the koala existed in the city but were not aware of the decline and the threats facing the koala. It was obvious that communication and consultation with the community was necessary to reverse the decline.

The representatives and the community were presented with the options and costs required to stabilise the koala population decline. At that stage it was estimated to cost approximately \$84.50 per lot per annum (See Appendix 2).

From the Koala Summit and community consultation, in which Council received 101 responses, came the "Redlands Koala Policy and Implementation Strategy 2008, Working together to stop koala decline". This policy's objectives are to:

- provide a new vision and to meet community expectations to stop the rapid continuing decline of koalas by 2011;
- take immediate action to recover the existing population to more than 5000 koalas in the Koala Coast by 2014;
- educate the whole of the community that Redlands habitat and its koalas are special, unique and integral to the environmental, social, cultural, and economic wellbeing of our community;
- measure, map and recognise in the state koala plan the unique North Stradbroke Island koala population.

Within this policy, Council took the opportunity to highlight that it recognised the population as "endangered" within the Koala Coast Region while the Queensland State Government identified it as vulnerable. It was also recognised that the protection and management of the koala required all three tiers of government working together with businesses, and the wider community to undertake the appropriate actions in the following areas:

1. Impacts of urbanisation and its future growth on the koala population.
2. Road and rail koala deaths.
3. Dog attacks on koalas.
4. Protect, enhance and increase koala habitat.

5. Improvement to koala movement in our neighbourhoods and backyards.
6. Increased commitment to the level of funding and monitoring.
7. Creation of a "Koala Active Community" which understands its role and takes positive action for the long term survival of koalas.
8. Preparation of a detailed and costed implementation strategy.

Key actions being undertaken by Redland City Council for the protection and management of koalas are:

1. Increasing Habitat

The creation of an Environment Separate Charge in 1993 has allowed Council to purchase over 800ha of land. In recent years, a focus has been on the purchase of land within the urban area for protection of koala habitat. The Environment Charge is split with funds being spent on land acquisition and maintenance. Currently Council is achieving over 5ha of revegetation of koala habitat per year. This sees Council planting over 8000 koala food trees per annum.

2. Protection of Habitat

Council's planning scheme over the years has developed strong measures for the protection and management of koala habitat in particular in the rural sections of the city. Future amendments are required to look at options for the retention and protection of individual habitat on private property within the urban areas.

3. Dog Management

Controls have been undertaken through amendments to the local law on dog control for areas within the city where 'denning' of dogs is required at night.

4. Impact of Cars

Council has also recently upgraded Quarry and Rickertt Road with Federal funding, which included the construction of two koala underpasses and koala exclusion fencing. Increasing awareness of the impact of koalas has also been undertaken with the use of both static and LED flashing signs. Council has also been instrumental in providing information for the construction of fauna fencing and upgrade of existing culverts for state controlled roads in the Redland City.

5. Increased Education

Council has undertaken, through media opportunities, the use of social networking where an orphaned koala named PanDa was provided with his own Facebook page. His number of friends is around 4000, with most of them local, but also includes national, state and international fans. PanDa died in 2010 from disease. This provided an opportunity to educate the community on the impact disease has on the koala population. Council has also recently established a website, www.koalacentral.com.au. This site is about providing opportunity for the community to learn, act and play. Council organises an event called "Dogs Day Out" which allows dog owners to meet and mingle but also learn about the impact of dogs on the local koalas and get advice on minimising the harm from dogs.

6. Koala Active Community

This has been undertaken through the creation of the Koala Conservation Agreement Program; this is an extension program where residents with properties larger than 1000m² get advice and funding to carry out replanting, weeding, construct fauna friendly fences, and build dog enclosures. Presently Council has 51 properties making an area of over 70ha.

7. Research

Council has assisted with funding for local universities to get a better understanding of the koala movement through the City, in particular urban areas and also on the economic value of the koala to the Redlands. The economic study looked at the property value that is derived from living next to koala habitat (\$29,600) and the ability to view a koala (\$3100).

Council has continually sent requests to both the state and federal Governments for the listing of the koala as endangered as per the following:

- In September 2007 Council resolved "That a letter be sent to the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism, requesting that the koala be listed as 'endangered' throughout the South-East Queensland Bio-region."
- In July 2009 Council resolved "That Redland City Council calls on the State Government to declare the Koala an endangered species in the Koala Coast under the *Nature Conservation Act*".
- In 2010 I personally made representation to then Minister for the Environment, the Hon Peter Garrett MP about seeking the listing of the koala as endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*.
- In 2010 following the election I wrote to the Hon Tony Burke MP requesting the Federal Minister to list the koala as endangered.
- In October 2010 Council resolved "That Redland City Council reiterates its position in respect to the classification of koalas as enunciated in our submission to the Koala Conservation Strategy 2009-2014 and calls on the new Federal Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, the Hon Tony Burke MP, to recognise that the conservation status of the rapidly declining local population of koalas in South East Queensland as 'critically endangered' under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*".

In relation to the National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy, Council would be keen to see this document provide the opportunity to recognise specific measures for the protection and management of the koala in specific areas. This is particularly important in an area like the Redlands (Koala Coast) which is facing extinction without a concerted effort by the federal, state, local governments and the community. An immediate action could be the investigation of land parcels owned and managed by all tiers of government to investigate opportunities for the protection and enhancement of habitat. An example of this would be that the Federal Government currently owns 98ha of land in the suburb of Birkdale which contains large areas of koala habitat. Council has written to the relevant departments seeking opportunity for these parcels to be transferred to, or purchased by Council for the protection and management of koala habitat.

In summary, to stop the decline in koala population here in the Redlands it will require support from the federal government through the following:

1. Listing the koala as critically endangered;
2. Strengthening planning control for the enhancement, protection and management of koala habitat;

3. By looking at federal government land holdings in the Redlands and ensuring that protection and management of this habitat is occurring;
4. By funding and assisting Council with land acquisitions for the protection and management of habitat;
5. By ensuring federal funding for roads, including funding for the creation of fauna/koala crossing and appropriate fencing;
6. By assisting local governments in funding programs that assist local residents in implementing koala friendly fencing, denning dogs, managing and planting habitat.

I am more than happy to make a presentation to the Senate Inquiry if necessary.

Yours faithfully

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Mayor of Redland City
Queensland's Sustainable City for 2010

Attachments:

- Appendix 1 Koala Conservation and Management Policy and Strategy 2002
- Appendix 2 Koala Futures Discussion Paper (Koala Summit 2-3 November 2007)
- Appendix 3 Redlands Koala Policy and Implementation Strategy 2008