

# Chapter 6

## The National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy

6.1 This chapter discusses the national strategy designed to conserve and manage Australia's koalas as well as several state-based strategies.

### The National Koala Conservation Strategy 1998

6.2 The first national koala management strategy was released in January 1998.<sup>1</sup> The *National Koala Conservation Strategy* was developed jointly by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments through the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC).

6.3 The document was prepared in response to concern over the declining koala population. A nomination in 1996 to list the koala under the Commonwealth government's species protection legislation, the *Endangered Species Protection Act 1992*, found that whilst the koala was still widespread on a national basis, it was declining in parts of its range and because of its cultural significance there was much public and scientific concern about its conservation.<sup>2</sup> The koala however did not qualify for listing at the time.

6.4 The aim of the strategy was to 'provide a national framework for the conservation of koala' and identified the major threats to koalas as land clearing, habitat fragmentation, disease, natural disasters, roads, dogs and over-browsing.<sup>3</sup> The strategy addressed these issues with six objectives to:

- conserve koalas in their existing habitat through habitat identification, monitoring and local government planning;
- rehabilitate and restore koala habitat through revegetation;
- develop a better understanding of the conservation biology of koalas through mapping and assessment of koala populations and assessment of population dynamics;
- ensure the community has access to factual information about the distribution, conservation and management of koalas;
- manage captive, sick or injured koalas to ensure consistent and high standards of care; and

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1 Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC), *National Koala Conservation Strategy*, January 1998, pp 1–2.

2 Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC), *National Koala Conservation Strategy*, January 1998, p. 5.

3 Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC), *National Koala Conservation Strategy*, January 1998, pp 1–2.

- manage over-browsing to prevent koala starvation and ecosystem damage.<sup>4</sup>

6.5 The guiding principles of the strategy were to integrate the conservation of koalas with pre-existing measures to protect Australia's biodiversity and to apply the precautionary principle to avoid, wherever practicable, serious or irreversible damage to the environment.<sup>5</sup>

6.6 The 1998 strategy identified that the implementation of the objectives would have financial costs to governments, industry, businesses and the community. The costs however would substantially reduce over time due to 'timely investment in conservation measures'. The strategy also stated that the benefits from the conservation of nature would produce sustainable land use practices and enhanced opportunities for ecotourism.<sup>6</sup>

6.7 It was further recognised that the conservation of koalas is a complex task requiring an integrated management approach requiring input from the community and from all levels of government.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Review of the implementation of the 1998 strategy***

6.8 In 2006 the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council agreed to review the strategy with a view to updating the objectives for the protection and management of koala populations.

6.9 Since the release of the strategy significant changes had occurred in the legislative context, including the listing of koalas under state species protection legislation.<sup>8</sup> It was also observed that there had continued to be 'significant local declines in koala populations and koala habitat in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria'.<sup>9</sup> The koala was also nominated for listing in 2006 under the Commonwealth's revised species protection legislation, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The koala was not listed on that occasion.

6.10 The review summarised that:

In general, there has been some work completed towards achieving the aim and objectives of the Strategy, but the Strategy itself has not been properly

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4 Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC), *National Koala Conservation Strategy*, January 1998, pp 10–14.

5 Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC), *National Koala Conservation Strategy*, January 1998, p. 9.

6 Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC), *National Koala Conservation Strategy*, January 1998, p. 9.

7 Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC), *National Koala Conservation Strategy*, January 1998, p. 7.

8 For example the koala was listed as vulnerable in the south east Queensland bioregion under the *Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 1994* (Qld).

9 M. Predavec, *Review of progress in implementing the 1998 National Koala Conservation Strategy*, Report prepared by Parsons Brinckerhoff for the Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, September 2008, p. iii.

implemented. There is little evidence to demonstrate that the Strategy has driven any of the achievements over the last 10 years. Although connections can be drawn between the Strategy and some state-based initiatives, such as the koala management and conservation plans in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, these connections have not been widely promoted and appear not to be coordinated through the Strategy.<sup>10</sup>

6.11 The review found that the strategy worked well as an overarching framework for the protection of koalas however it needed to be supported by action plans to ensure its effectiveness.<sup>11</sup> It was found that integration of the strategy needed to occur across all levels of government and should meld with existing government frameworks such as the Native Vegetation Framework and the National Biodiversity Strategy.

6.12 The Commonwealth government was seen to be the most appropriate driver of the strategy however much of the responsibility for its implementation rested with the state governments. It was recommended that a committee or secretariat be established with the authority to drive the implementation of the strategy.<sup>12</sup> Such a committee should be 'charged with ensuring that the strategy is better understood by all stakeholders, that action plans are developed and that monitoring takes place.'<sup>13</sup>

6.13 The review also came to a number of conclusions to improve the strategy including the need to:

- properly fund the strategy in a transparent manner;
- recognise the future threat of climate change on koala populations;
- conduct future study on the genetics of koalas Australia-wide to establish genetic management units across its distribution and assist with a possible regional listing of the koala under the EPBC Act; and
- identify and deal with diseases at an early stage.<sup>14</sup>

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10 M. Predavec, *Review of progress in implementing the 1998 National Koala Conservation Strategy*, Report prepared by Parsons Brinckerhoff for the Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, September 2008, p. iii.

11 M. Predavec, *Review of progress in implementing the 1998 National Koala Conservation Strategy*, Report prepared by Parsons Brinckerhoff for the Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, September 2008, p. 43.

12 M. Predavec, *Review of progress in implementing the 1998 National Koala Conservation Strategy*, Report prepared by Parsons Brinckerhoff for the Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, September 2008, p. 43.

13 M. Predavec, *Review of progress in implementing the 1998 National Koala Conservation Strategy*, Report prepared by Parsons Brinckerhoff for the Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, September 2008, p. 43.

14 M. Predavec, *Review of progress in implementing the 1998 National Koala Conservation Strategy*, Report prepared by Parsons Brinckerhoff for the Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, September 2008, pp 44–49.

## **The National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009–2014**

6.14 On 5 November 2009 the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council endorsed the *National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009–2014* which replaced the 1998 strategy.

6.15 Similar to the 1998 strategy, the new strategy aims to 'conserve koalas by retaining viable populations in the wild throughout their natural range'.<sup>15</sup> The strategy acknowledged the findings of the review and includes updated objectives to protect koalas. Specifically, it establishes an implementation plan as well as an implementation team to coordinate the identified actions. The strategy has also recognised climate change as a threat to koalas and increased focus on multi-species and landscape-scale protection and recovery.

6.16 The strategy identifies habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation as the major threat to koalas in key parts of their range. Over-browsing, natural disasters, disease, vehicle collisions, predation by dogs and climate change were also identified as threatening processes for koalas.

6.17 The long-term objectives of the strategy, to be met within 50 years, are to ensure that koalas are not nationally threatened and to stabilise koala populations by increasing numbers in identified priority areas and reducing numbers in areas of overabundance.<sup>16</sup>

6.18 The short term objectives of the strategy, to be achieved within the next 10 years, are to protect remaining koala habitat, increase consideration of koala habitat in development planning and increase community involvement in the conservation and care of koalas.<sup>17</sup>

6.19 To achieve these objectives an implementation plan with six categories of actions has been developed. These categories and actions are designed to:

- identify and protect habitat;
- monitor over browsed habitats and develop translocation guidelines;
- develop national guidelines for road design in koala habitat, create strategies for dog management and address the issue of disease;
- provide for greater community involvement in conserving koalas;
- develop guidelines for caring for koalas in captivity; and

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15 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009–2014*, Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, 2009, p. 4.

16 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009–2014*, Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, 2009, p. 4.

17 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009–2014*, Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, 2009, p. 4.

- conduct further research on koala populations.<sup>18</sup>

6.20 The strategy noted that there will be a financial cost to implement the strategy and that:

While there are already resources directed to koala conservation and management, resources will be required to implement this strategy. Resources from governments at all levels will be supplemented by ongoing and potentially increased commitments from community organisations, the private sector and philanthropists to assist the achievement of the strategy's objectives.<sup>19</sup>

6.21 Under the strategy a cross-jurisdictional implementation team is to be established to 'promote and coordinate the actions identified in the plan'.<sup>20</sup> The implementation team is to be an advisory body under the Natural Resources Management Ministerial Council which will determine operational requirements and composition of the team.

6.22 The implementation team is required to discuss progress against performance targets at least every 12 months and report annually to the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council on progress against these targets. These reports are to be publicly available and provided to interested stakeholders.<sup>21</sup>

6.23 The implementation team is to consult with an advisory group that consists of Australian, state and territory government members with direct involvement with koala conservation, in addition to a range of stakeholders such as local government, conservation groups and researchers. The advisory group is to meet annually and consider progress on the strategy and distribute new information to interested parties.<sup>22</sup>

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18 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009–2014*, Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, 2009, pp 23–32.

19 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009–2014*, Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, 2009, p. 7.

20 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009–2014*, Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, 2009, p. 7.

21 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009–2014*, Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, 2009, pp 8 and 10.

22 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009–2014*, Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, 2009, p. 8.

6.24 The implementation team and the advisory group are supported by a secretariat provided by the Australian government.<sup>23</sup> The secretariat is to arrange meetings of the implementation team and advisory group and coordinate reports, including annual performance reporting. On behalf of the implementation team, the secretariat will also arrange workshops and develop draft national guidelines.

6.25 The strategy is to be monitored and evaluated annually by the implementation team. An independent external review will also be conducted after five years.<sup>24</sup>

#### ***First report of the implementation team***

6.26 The first report of the implementation team to the Natural Resources Management Ministerial Council was released in 2010. The report identified that a secretariat to the implementation team had been established within the Commonwealth environment department.<sup>25</sup>

6.27 The report provides a brief overview of koala conservation measures in each jurisdiction and then details actions that are planned or underway as indicated in the implementation plan. The review does not provide any conclusions or evaluate the progress of the strategy.

### **Evaluation of the National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy**

6.28 The committee received evidence from the Koala Research Network that the strategy was successful at providing an overarching framework for the national conservation of the koala. The Koala Research Network stated that:

The great advantage of the National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy is that it was carefully negotiated and formally signed off. This represents a high level of agreement, sets a framework that is so hard to obtain for any species, and gives clear direction for the way forward.<sup>26</sup>

6.29 The TSSC was also supportive of the National Koala Management and Conservation Strategy:

We feel that [the development of the National Koala Management and Conservation Strategy] is a positive step in creating an overarching strategy that could be used to enhance management of the koala by trying to

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23 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009–2014*, Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, 2009, p. 9.

24 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009–2014*, Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, 2009, p. 9.

25 Implementation Team, *National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009–2014: First Implementation Report to the Natural Resources Management Ministerial Council*, National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy Secretariat, Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Canberra, 2010, p. 2, [www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/publications/koala-strategy/pubs/koala-strategy-first-implementation-report.pdf](http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/publications/koala-strategy/pubs/koala-strategy-first-implementation-report.pdf) (accessed 3 August 2011).

26 Koala Research Network, *Submission 29*, p. 4.

nationally coordinate information, resources, implementation of the strategy and also to coordinate in some research, hopefully having sufficient long-term resources that would go into monitoring of key populations. That monitoring should feed back in an adaptive management framework into the strategy so that the strategy can be continually reappraised and therefore evolve over time to become more effective.<sup>27</sup>

6.30 However, there was scepticism amongst a number of submitters that whilst providing a framework, the strategy is inefficient at having any meaningful effect on the long-term survival of the koala. For example, Dreamworld submitted that:

The National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy is a policy document. While it notes that its successful implementation depends on sustained commitment by a variety of stakeholders, the Strategy is still weak in not setting out more clearly the steps and mechanisms to ensure the required degree of cooperation and commitment is secured and sustained.<sup>28</sup>

6.31 Concerns were similarly raised over the impact that the strategy would have on community action. Mrs Margaret Hardy stated:

There is no indication from a 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.<sup>29</sup>

6.32 It was also suggested that the strategy has not been widely publicised, with koala wildlife shelters unaware of its existence.<sup>30</sup>

6.33 The strategy was also criticised for not being able to direct specific actions to key parts of the koalas range.<sup>31</sup> The Koala Research Network submitted to the committee that:

Koala conservation status varies regionally and this impacts on their direct management as well as that of the habitat. Regional strategies need to be developed within a national policy to address important regional issues.<sup>32</sup>

6.34 Finally, Professor Carrick, and Drs Melzer, Ellis and Fitzgibbon provided a withering assessment of the effectiveness of the NKCMS:

...examination of its own implementation reporting shows most 'initiatives' are really 're-badged' existing responses – largely from the States and driven by State priorities, not the National Strategy.

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27 Professor Peter Harrison, Member, Threatened Species Scientific Committee, *Committee Hansard*, 1 August 2011, p. 51.

28 Dreamworld, *Submission 8*, p. 3.

29 Mrs Margaret Hardy, *Submission 3*, p. 3.

30 Ms Colleen Wood, *Submission 71*, p. 4.

31 For example see: Dr Alistair Melzer, *Submission 7*, p. 15; and Koala Research Network, *Submission 29*, p. 4.

32 Koala Research Network, *Submission 29*, p. 4.

...in reality, the [NKMCS] contains no commitment to tangible action or resource provision by the Commonwealth, the previous version was shown to be ineffective and irrelevant and it is now almost halfway through its present incarnation with precious little of practical benefit to Koalas that can be attributed to the strategy.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Improvements to the strategy***

6.35 A major concern of submitters was the lack of funding and resourcing set aside for the strategy.<sup>34</sup> According to the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, the strategy will 'achieve nothing' unless properly resourced and implemented and consequently the strategy 'must be adequately resourced and firm commitments made by all levels of Government for its implementation.'<sup>35</sup>

6.36 The Koala Research Network recommended that the Commonwealth government should take the lead in implementing the strategy with the resourcing of research and community organisations pursuing the objectives of the strategy.<sup>36</sup>

6.37 Similarly the Coastwatchers Association put to the committee that funding and resources should also be made available to local government and community groups with 'an emphasis on joint ventures and negotiating and implementing solutions with private and public landholders.'<sup>37</sup>

6.38 Some submitters also argued that greater coordination between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and local governments needs to occur to better achieve the strategy objectives.<sup>38</sup> For example the Australian Koala Foundation stated:

No formal mechanism exists to incorporate the outputs of the strategy into koala management practices at a State or Local level.<sup>39</sup>

6.39 To improve the effectiveness of the strategy a number of submitters recommended that it be given legislative grounding.<sup>40</sup> The Koala Action Group

33 Professor Frank Carrick, and Dr Alistair Melzer, Dr Bill Ellis and Dr Sean Fitzgibbon, *Submission 101*, pp 2 and 10.

34 For example see: Dr Alistair Melzer, *Submission 7*, p. 18; Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, *Submission 15*, p. 7; Australian Koala Foundation, *Submission 25*, p. 14; Koala Research Network, *Submission 29*, p. 4; Friends of Felton, *Submission 13*, p. 8; and The Coastwatchers Association, *Submission 54*, p. 5.

35 Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, *Submission 15*, pp 7–8.

36 Koala Research Network, *Submission 29*, p. 4.

37 The Coastwatchers Association, *Submission 54*, p. 5.

38 For example see: Australian Koala Foundation, *Submission 25*, p. 14; and Mr Chris Allen, *Submission 35*, p. 20.

39 Australian Koala Foundation, *Submission 25*, p. 14.

40 For example see: Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, *Submission 15*, p. 7; Koala Action Group Queensland, *Submission 17*, p. 6; and Koala Research Network, *Submission 29*, p. 4.



Queensland summarised that 'it is at the end of the day only a strategy with its main output to "provide policy advice" and thus lacks the strength of legislative instruments.'<sup>41</sup>

6.40 The Koala Research Network suggested that the strategy currently lacks the legislative powers to enforce consistent identification and protection of key koala habitat areas.<sup>42</sup> It recommended that the strategy should include national standards for koala habitat identification, rating and mapping and that federal and state legislative powers be put in place to protect habitat. Local government koala conservation plans should also be required in accordance with such established national standards.

### **Committee comment**

6.41 Although recognising the National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy has some merit, the committee agrees with the concerns raised about the strategy's effectiveness. In particular, the committee believes that progress is too slow, that the identified measures may not be adequate, and that there is insufficient national leadership.

6.42 In the committee's view it is necessary to implement the strategy effectively in an attempt to halt the decline in koala numbers rather than to allow the population to continue to slide inevitably towards threatened species listing. The committee has stated previously that it is preferable to take early and proactive action. In the committee's view this will give the best chance to secure the long term viability of the species. It is likely that this is the last opportunity to properly conserve Australia's koala population before its threatened species listing becomes a *fait accompli*.

### ***Progress and level of ambition***

6.43 The committee is concerned about the slow progress in implementing the strategy. While acknowledging the achievements listed in the first implementation report, for a five year strategy there are several items that do not appear to have made any progress and too many items that are categorised as 'planned', 'in progress' or 'underway'.<sup>43</sup>

6.44 The committee notes that although it is unclear how many meetings or discussions the implementation team has had, the minimum number is specified as at least one per annum. This would appear to be entirely inadequate for serious progress to be made.

6.45 The committee also notes that 'an independent external reviewer will be contracted to review and evaluate the strategy and its implementation within five

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41 Koala Action Group Queensland, *Submission 17*, p. 6.

42 Koala Research Network, *Submission 29*, p. 4.

43 See page 24 for examples of items not yet commenced and pp 7–24 for other examples: Implementation Team, *National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009–2014: First Implementation Report to the Natural Resources Management Ministerial Council*, National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy Secretariat, Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Canberra, 2010.

years.<sup>44</sup> In the committee's view this could be too late to address any substantial issues that may arise and which may require a redirection of the strategy and/or new elements to be added. Accordingly, the committee recommends that an intermediate external review to assess progress at the strategy's midway point be conducted.

### **Recommendation 18**

**6.46 The committee recommends that an independent external review be conducted on the National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy to monitor the adequacy of progress. The review should assess and report on the progress made at the strategy's midpoint.**

**6.47 The review must include an assessment of the:**

- **strategy's implementation to date and prospects into the future;**
- **strategy's effectiveness in stabilising koala numbers in areas of declining population, and in reducing the pressure of overabundant populations;**
- **strategy's level of ambition, including whether new elements are required; and**
- **adequacy of the Commonwealth's and the states' respective roles and funding commitments.**

### ***National leadership***

6.48 One reason behind the strategy's apparent lack of progress is the low level of Commonwealth involvement. Aside from 'exploring the development' of a project to evaluate koala conservation actions, and the establishment of a secretariat to support the implementation team and to improve coordination between states, there appears to be little commitment from the Australian Government.<sup>45</sup>

6.49 Despite the evaluation of the former strategy recommending that governments 'properly fund the strategy in a transparent manner', there is no information in the strategy about the Commonwealth or the states funding commitments. The only mention is that:

In some cases additional funding and resources will be required to complete actions. Decisions about resourcing need to be made by jurisdictions bearing in mind the priorities identified in the strategy.<sup>46</sup>

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44 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009–2014*, Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, 2009, p. 9; note that the strategy states on page 3 that it will be reviewed 'after five years'.

45 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009–2014*, Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, 2009, p. 2.

46 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009–2014*, Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra, 2009, p. 5.

6.50 The committee considers this to be inadequate.

6.51 The committee is concerned that without concerted national leadership from the Australian Government, the National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy will suffer the same fate as its predecessor, the National Koala Conservation Strategy. Accordingly, the committee recommends that the government adequately resource the strategy and commit to a much stronger leadership role.

### **Recommendation 19**

**6.52 The committee recommends that the Australian Government adequately resource the National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy, and ensure that it is properly implemented through committing to a much stronger leadership role.**

### **State-based koala management plans**

6.53 In addition to the national strategy, each state which has a koala population has a state-based strategy, which are outlined briefly below.

#### *New South Wales*

6.54 The New South Wales government has prepared the *Recovery plan for the koala* which was released in 2008. The plan 'identifies actions to be taken to ensure the long-term viability of the koala in nature and the parties who are responsible for undertaking these actions.'<sup>47</sup> The recovery plan establishes a conservation framework using existing legislation and aims to:

- update and facilitate the implementation of existing legislation to improve conservation of koalas and their habitat;
- identify areas of koala habitat and prioritise on-ground management actions;
- identify research actions; and
- increase awareness in the community and amongst all levels of government regarding the management of koalas.<sup>48</sup>

#### *Victoria*

6.55 In 2004 the state government released *Victoria's Koala Management Strategy*. The aim of the strategy is to 'conserve koalas by retaining viable populations in the wild throughout their natural range'.<sup>49</sup> The strategy recognises that the koala population in Victoria is more secure than other states and accordingly the

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47 Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW, *Recovery plan for the koala (Phascolarctos cinereus)*, Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW, Sydney, November 2008, p. vii.

48 Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW, *Recovery plan for the koala (Phascolarctos cinereus)*, Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW, Sydney, November 2008, p. vii.

49 Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment, *Victoria's koala management strategy*, Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment, Brunswick, 2004, p. 6.

government has a responsibility 'to ensure that the species continues to flourish in the wild without damaging other natural values'.<sup>50</sup> Conservation and management of the koala is integrated with other biodiversity measures and relies on community and local government input.<sup>51</sup>

### *Queensland*

6.56 In October 2006 the Queensland government released a state-wide conservation plan for the koala: the *Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2006 and Management Program 2006–2016* (the Koala Plan). As the title suggests, the Koala Plan is made up of two parts: the conservation plan and the koala management program.

6.57 The conservation plan is subordinate legislation made under the state Nature Conservation Act 'to promote the continued existence of viable koala populations in the wild'.<sup>52</sup> To this end, the conservation plan divides the state into three koala districts:

- District A in the southern portion of the south-east Queensland bioregion (including Brisbane, the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast) where there is the highest threat level;
- District B in the northern portion of the south-east Queensland bioregion (north of the Sunshine coast nearly to Gladstone) where there is a moderate to high threat level; and
- District C comprising the remainder of the state where there is the lowest threat level.<sup>53</sup>

6.58 The conservation plan also:

- prescribes criteria against which certain developments in koala habitat must be assessed;
- requires the state government to prepare a map showing koala habitat areas; and
- prescribes restrictions on the granting of permits for handling koalas.<sup>54</sup>

6.59 The koala management program aims to complement the conservation plan by providing policy direction and management approaches to address the key threatening

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50 Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment, *Victoria's koala management strategy*, Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment, Brunswick, 2004, p. 5.

51 Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment, *Victoria's koala management strategy*, Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment, Brunswick, 2004, p. 5.

52 *Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2006* (Qld), section 4.

53 Queensland Government, *Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2006 and Management Program 2006–2016*, Queensland Government – Environmental Protection Agency, Brisbane, 2006, pp 13–16.

54 *Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2006* (Qld), section 4.

process to koalas. The management plan includes policies on habitat protection and vegetation clearing; development; State Government infrastructure; vehicle-related mortality; dog attacks; research; public education and the rehabilitation of injured koalas.<sup>55</sup>

6.60 The land use and planning objectives that are outlined in the Koala Plan have also been incorporated into the preparation of the *South East Queensland Regional Plan 2005–2026*. The 2010 *Koala Conservation State Planning Policy* (SPP) and the *SEQ Koala Conservation State Planning Regulatory Provisions* (SPRP) also aim to protect koala habitat and provide habitat offsets.<sup>56</sup>

6.61 In 2008, two years after the Koala Plan was established, the Queensland government conducted a population survey of koalas in the Koala Coast and found a continuing substantial decline in the numbers of koalas.<sup>57</sup> As a result the *Koala Crisis Response Strategy* was released in December 2008 outlining a number of actions to be taken to halt the decline of the koala population in south-east Queensland. Measures outlined in the strategy include:

- creating new state planning instruments;
- ensuring land offsets create a net gain for koala habitat;
- securing additional koala habitat for conservation;
- undertake an extensive koala habitat mapping; and
- ensuring state roads are koala-friendly.<sup>58</sup>

6.62 In June 2010 the Queensland government budgeted \$45.5 million over five years towards implementing the *Koala Crisis Response Strategy*.<sup>59</sup>

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55 Queensland Government, *Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2006 and Management Program 2006–2016*, Queensland Government – Environmental Protection Agency, Brisbane, 2006, pp 17–28.

56 For an overview of legislation and planning policies in Queensland that protect the koala see: Ms Larissa Waters, *Submission 90*, pp 1–18; and Department of Environment and Resource Management, Queensland Government, *Submission 79*, pp 9–12.

57 Queensland Government, *Decline of the Koala Coast Koala Population: Population Status in 2008*, Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management, Brisbane, April 2009, p. 8, [www.derm.qld.gov.au/register/p02966aa.pdf](http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/register/p02966aa.pdf) (accessed 14 July 2011). The Koala Coast encompasses Redlands Shire and parts of Brisbane City, Logan City and Pine Rivers Shire.

58 Department of Environment and Resource Management, 'Koala response strategy', [www.derm.qld.gov.au/wildlife-ecosystems/wildlife/koalas/koala\\_crisis\\_response\\_strategy/#ban\\_on\\_bushland\\_habitat\\_clearing](http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/wildlife-ecosystems/wildlife/koalas/koala_crisis_response_strategy/#ban_on_bushland_habitat_clearing) (accessed 14 July 2011).

59 Department of Environment and Resource Management, Queensland Government, *Submission 79*, p. 5.

### ***South Australia***

6.63 According to the South Australian government, the protection and management of abundant koala populations in the state is a complex task with much of their suitable habitat occurring on private land or in peri-urban environments.<sup>60</sup> As such:

Management is generally directed towards the maintenance of the existing populations for their contribution to national rather than State goals...In effect, the main threats identified and being acted upon in South Australia are the grazing impact caused by abundant and increasing population size relative to available habitat...<sup>61</sup>

6.64 A policy framework has been developed to guide the actions which may be taken to respond to koalas which are posing a safety hazard to members of the public or are in dangerous situations.<sup>62</sup>

### **Senator Doug Cameron Acting Chair**

#### **Picture 6.1—An Acland koala, Queensland**



Source: Dr Nicola Laws and Mr Glenn Beutel, *Submission 74*, p. 40. Reproduced with the permission of Dr Nicola Laws and Mr Glenn Beutel.

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60 Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of South Australia, *Submission 77*, p. 2.

61 Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of South Australia, *Submission 77*, p. 2.

62 Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of South Australia, *Submission 77*, p. 2.