
Planning Scheme Policy 13 Koala Conservation

1.1 Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this Planning Scheme Policy is to provide guidance to applicants in respect of addressing the requirements of the Koala Conservation Overlay Code.

1.2 Tree Clearing Practices

(a) Background

Felling trees within koala habitat can result in the death of, or serious injury to, koalas which are present in those trees or in trees adjacent to those trees being cleared. A development approval permitting tree clearing in one of the koala habitat areas will include conditions based on the practices set out in this policy

(b) Responsibility of a Person Authorised to Fell the Trees

- (i) Prior to the commencement of tree felling it is the responsibility of the person authorised to fell the trees, or that person's delegate, to appoint a koala spotter.
- (ii) During felling operations, the person authorised to fell the trees must:
 - liaise with the on-site koala spotter; and
 - ensure that each tree identified by the koala spotter as being a risk to koalas if felled, is not felled or damaged until obtaining a rehabilitation permit granted under the *Nature Conservation Regulation 1994*, and either:
 - the koala has moved from the felling site of its own volition; or
 - the koala is moved from the tree and transported from the felling site to prescribed natural habitat in accordance with the conditions of the Development Permit;
 - (A) The person authorised to fell the trees, or that person's delegate, must ensure that the felling of trees is undertaken only by sequential clearing, as described below.
 - (B) Sequential clearing is a method of felling trees where operations are conducted in discrete stages such that koalas are provided sufficient time and space to move from the clearing site of their own volition without the need for human intervention to remove and relocate them (clearing of all trees on site in a single, uninterrupted operation is *not* sequential clearing).
 - (C) Sequential clearing requires the felling of limited numbers of trees at any one time and not clearing any tree where a koala is present. Koala habitat corridors and links are to be maintained during sequential clearing to allow the natural movement of animals from the site being cleared to neighbouring habitat areas.

(c) Responsibility of a Koala Spotter

- (i) A koala spotter is a person who holds a tertiary qualification in biology or zoology, or who is demonstrably experienced in the identification and location of koalas in their natural habitat. For example, a koala keeper employed by a licenced Wildlife Exhibitor (i.e. a zoo) may be capable of demonstrating competence in locating koalas.
- (ii) Prior to the commencement of, and during felling operations, it is the responsibility of the koala spotter to:
 - be present at the site of felling operations; and
 - identify any tree at the site within which a koala is present, as well as any tree that has a crown which is intermeshed or overlapping with such a tree; and
 - advise the person who is authorised to conduct the felling operations, or that person's representative, of the precise location of each such tree.

1.3 Rehabilitation of Land to Provide Koala Habitat

(a) Background

This section provides advice on the rehabilitation of existing cleared or partially cleared areas, or areas disturbed by development in koala habitat areas. Where a Development Permit contains any conditions to rehabilitate specified areas, rehabilitation must follow the standards stated in this section and it is the responsibility of the developer to ensure this occurs.

(b) When to Rehabilitate

Rehabilitation of a site commences progressively where development is to occur in stages and as soon as practicable after completion of works for each stage of the development.

(c) Plant Species for Revegetation

The plant species to be used in revegetation are consistent with the pre-clearing regional ecosystem. Applicants are encouraged to use plants propagated from local seed stock wherever practicable.

(d) Site Preparation

Prior to planting, the site must be adequately prepared, which involves (but is not limited to):

- (i) ensuring the soil is appropriate for replanting (e.g. stockpiled topsoil should be replaced) and appropriately tilled; and
- (ii) removing competition from non-native species.

(e) Planting

The revegetation species are planted:

- (i) at densities in the order of 300 stems per hectare; or
- (ii) at similar densities to those found in pre-clearing regional ecosystems.

(f) Post-planting Monitoring

Planted vegetation is monitored for not less than two years to ensure its survival. During the monitoring period, any planted vegetation that dies is replaced with healthy plant(s) meeting the requirements above. Replacement plants should be planted in the same locality and continue to be monitored.

(g) Landform Restoration

If the landform has been altered from its natural condition, it is restored in a manner which minimizes long term obstructions to the movement of koalas across the site. The proposed restoration should be described as part of the development application. For example, a developer may identify how they intend to re-profile faces and benches to provide for the movement of a koala within or across the site, or identify areas which are to be filled to maximise the potential for successful revegetation.

(h) Mitigating Hazards for Koalas

The developer is responsible for ensuring that any building, structure or any other works that would be a hazard to the well-being of a koala, is isolated from contact by a koala (for example, by erecting a koala exclusion fence).

1.4 Koala Sensitive Development

(a) Background

There are a number of measures that can be taken to reduce the impact of development on koala populations, such as road or fence design and construction. This section establishes the principles and practices in this regard, which will be relied upon to devise measures (including conditions of approval) appropriate to the particular development proposal and its site.

(b) Design Objectives

The design objectives include:

- (i) The protection of undisturbed areas where koalas live in conservation and open space areas;
- (ii) Providing continuous connections of habitat and minimise disruptions by roads and structures;
- (iii) Reconnecting disturbed corridors;
- (iv) Buffering existing habitat from the impacts of earthworks, clearing, fire, weed invasion;
- (v) Mitigating threats from dog attacks; and
- (vi) Minimising impacts from road traffic.

Innovative layout, fencing, including koala habitat within parks, streetscaping and sensitive road alignment can all help achieve koala conservation objectives as well as other development objectives.

(c) Habitat Links

The most important characteristics of a habitat link are that it connects two or more areas of habitat, and provides a relatively safe area for movement and refuge for koalas. Habitat links should be established whenever an opportunity is identified and should incorporate the following principles:

- (i) Links are provided to habitat beyond the boundary of the development site.

- (ii) Multiple links between habitat areas are provided to maximise connectivity.
- (iii) Links are based on existing natural features, such as watercourses and associated riparian vegetation, and significant areas of remnant bushland.
- (iv) Land unsuitable for development, including flood-prone land or steep land is also used to provide links.
- (v) Links are made as wide as possible. Links 100m in width or greater are most desirable as they minimise 'edge effects', but may not be achievable in all circumstances.
- (vi) Where links include cleared or partially cleared areas, these are revegetated and include the planting of recognised koala food trees.
- (vii) Where it is impracticable to provide for vegetated corridors, single trees are retained or planted across a site to provide temporary shelter.
- (viii) As far as practicable, roads or other service corridors are located outside koala habitat or links between habitat.

(d) Road Design and Construction

A significant threat to koalas in Queensland is injury sustained from strikes by vehicles. To mitigate this threat in the most practicable manner, the strategies used in road design should have regard to the number of vehicles likely to use the proposed roads, the anticipated vehicle speeds, and the likely volumes of traffic between the hours of 7pm and 5am.

Taking these factors into account, the following road design and construction techniques can be implemented as appropriate according to the road function:

- (i) Using koala exclusion fencing along the road to direct koalas to:
 - Overpasses, underpasses or culverts; or
 - Designated koala crossings with the following features:
 - increased lighting and warning signs;
 - speed reduction devices;
 - road crossings that are narrow, raised and painted; and
 - trimmed vegetation at crossing points to increase visibility.
- (ii) Reducing vehicles speeds on roads other than arterial roads by incorporating:
 - curving and winding road sections;
 - speed reduction devices;
 - awareness signs;
 - signed low speed limits (residential roads); and
 - other traffic calming devices.

(e) Fence design

Fences are a major obstacle to koala movement. Koalas become easily confused and disoriented (often circling on the spot) when confronted with a new fence. Increased time spent on the ground increases their vulnerability to dogs (particularly in domestic yards) and traffic. A 'koala friendly fence' does not hinder the movement of, nor trap, a koala.

The following approaches to fence design are aimed at reducing the impact of fences on koala movement and mortality:

- (i) Allow koalas to climb easily through or over the fence by:
 - Choosing materials, such as a timber post-and-rail or chain wire, that a koala can easily grip and climb;
 - Using rails or slats that are not more than 15cm wide;
 - Leave at least a 30cm gap between ground level and the first rail or strand.
- (ii) Provide a means for koalas to get over a fence that cannot be easily climbed by:
 - Installing a timber post leaning against the fence at a 45 degree angle on either side;
 - Planting vegetation within very close proximity (branches touching) on either side of the fence to provide a natural ladder;

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- Installing panels or planks horizontally along the top of the fence to provide a walkway.
- (f) Reducing the Impacts of Utility services
- The installation of utility services:
- (i) Avoids damage to the roots of trees and other significant habitat by using shared trenches and offsets of service alignments.
 - (ii) Includes root barriers where necessary to protect utility services from root damage.
- (g) Landscaping
- Plants used for landscaping:
- (i) Comprise 70% of Australian plants of which 50% are native to the locality; and
 - (ii) Include trees of the genera *Eucalyptus*, *Corymbia*, *Angophora*, or *Lophostemon*, which are known to be favoured by koalas except where trees of these species are inappropriate for the site because of their size or intolerance of the ground or soil conditions; and
 - (iii) Do not impede the spatial movement of koalas (for example, dense hedges that would act as a fence and restrict the movement of koalas).

Historic Version
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