

## DOT POINT BRIEFING NOTE

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**Subject**      **Noosa Koala Mapping**

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### POINTS OF RELEVANCE

#### South East Queensland

- The new koala conservation protections increase the area of koala habitat protected across South East Queensland, and increase the level of protection offered within the regulatory framework.
- Koala priority areas cover **577,174ha** of land across South East Queensland (25% of the ShapingSEQ land area).
- Within this, a total of **319,404ha** has been mapped as koala habitat areas, and will be offered strict new protections under future changes to the planning framework.
- Clearing of koala habitat areas within Koala Priority Areas is prohibited under the new regulations. Some exemptions to the clearing prohibitions will apply, including a once-off 500m<sup>2</sup> allowance per premises, as well as an allowance for the removal of dangerous trees, and the creation or maintenance of firebreaks adjacent to infrastructure.
- There is an additional **372,395ha** koala habitat areas outside of koala priority areas. Developments involving the clearing of this habitat will be subject to development assessment, and 'avoid, minimise, offset' provisions will apply.
- Compared with the previous koala conservation framework, and Priority Koala Assessable Areas and Koala Assessable Development Areas, the future planning framework will increase the level of protection, and also increase the area of koala habitat protected by **421,860ha**.

#### Noosa

- Under the previous koala protection regulation, clearing was not allowed in Priority Koala Assessable Development Areas and Koala Assessable Development Areas that were outside the urban footprint. In Noosa Shire Council the total area was **4,420 hectares**.
- Under the new koala protection regulation, clearing of koala habitat is prohibited in Koala Priority Areas which is an area of **24,135 hectares**.
- This is an increase of **19,715 hectares** (24,135 – 4,420ha) where clearing is not permitted. This is an increase of 81%.

Effects into Rehabilitation Strategy Protection for Koalas

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### Background to Consultation and Mapping

Old maps 2005.  
Underpinning.

- Noosa Shire Council was involved in the development of the koala habitat mapping to support the implementation of the new regulatory planning framework.
- Consultation on the koala mapping and planning reforms has been ongoing with councils across South East Queensland from July 2019. Councils attended multiple consultation meetings with Department of Environment and Science (the department) staff at their offices, and other locations to understand issues and identify additional areas for inclusion.
- In response to the Koala Expert Panel's report, the department developed state-of-the-art koala habitat mapping using advanced modelling techniques and its expertise in statewide, comprehensive vegetation mapping.
- The new koala habitat mapping methodology was supported by the Koala Expert Panel.
- The methodology integrates a species distribution model with the Queensland Herbarium's regional ecosystem mapping and validated koala occurrence records, to produce a comprehensive map that ranks koala habitat values across south east Queensland.
- This new mapping approach is repeatable so it can be updated on a regular basis as changes in vegetation occur.
- Linking the new koala habitat mapping with the Queensland Government's existing vegetation and landcover mapping, and using a species model that uses koala sighting data, also allows the new koala habitat modelling to be updated and refined as data becomes available. Vegetation and koala habitat maps will be updated annually, allowing the Queensland Government to continue to accurately identify the best quality koala habitat and track changes over time.
- The koala habitat areas represent the best habitat for koalas, based on the combination of biophysical measures (including climate), suitable vegetation (for food and shelter) and koala occurrence records.

Rehabilitation Areas Map  
PMAV Cat X taken out

### Noosa Shire Council Mapped Koala Habitat Areas

- Noosa Shire nominated 7,609 hectares land as koala habitat, previously mapped under its planning scheme. The department accepted 6,895 hectares as locally refined koala habitat areas.
- To provide greater accuracy of the mapping, without having access to councils' development approvals, mapping was restricted to areas mapped as remnant or high value regrowth vegetation mapping. This removed scattered trees from the mapping.
- Areas of current Category X on a Property Map of Assessable Vegetation (PMAV) were also removed.
- Category X areas are generally not regulated by the vegetation management laws.
- In the image provided below (Figure 1), the area not included in the koala habitat mapping to the south east of the shopping centre is Category X in a PMAV gazetted in 2014.

### How is Category X vegetation dealt with?

- In response to concerns about the need to protect vegetation in Category X areas, the exemption for Category X in koala habitat areas has been amended to apply to only Category X under an existing PMAV. New PMAVs applied for after the date of commencement will not be included in this exemption.
- Category X areas, as defined under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* (VMA) are generally areas that are cleared, scattered trees, or regrowth not yet considered to be of high value.
- The department consulted with stakeholders, including members of the Koala Advisory Council and other State Government departments about the proposed planning reforms for koala conservation.
- Vegetation mapped within Category X areas, including those under a PMAV, can still be protected under local government planning schemes for development where local government is an assessment manager.

More quickly as a result of lost habitat for

Advisory Council / Final draft -  
Lore.



Figure 1 – Core Koala Habitat Mapping

■ Core remnant  
■ Core regrowth





Figure 2 – Example of mapping errors

- St Teresa's Catholic College and the surrounding housing development
- Noosaville State School