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**Submission RE DRAFT SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND KOALA CONSERVATION STRATEGY 2019-2024**

Dear Minister Enoch

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2019-2024.

I support many of the projected outcomes:

* The commitment to restore 1000 hectares of koala habitat in SEQ by 2024.
* I also support the commitment to introduce stronger laws to better protect koala habitat in Queensland.
* I support the threat management initiative.
* The exemption allowing firebreaks to be developed and maintained in Koala Habitat areas is also supported, provided that there are rules to prevent abuse and they are enforced.

I also have concerns about some the projected outcomes of the Draft SEQ Koala Conservation Policy.  I am raising the following points that I would like to see addressed prior to the next draft:

* The draft koala habitat mapping fails to protect areas where many of our koalas are living right now as evidenced by koala sightings recorded in the Atlas of Living Australia and Wildnet. Koala data shows many koalas are living outside the newly mapped areas. The Moreton Bay Region has a large population of koalas living and thriving in urban areas. These koalas will be given no protection at all. The koala population in Moreton Bay has already suffered due to the development and increased traffic in recent years.
* Land removed from the Government’s mapping of Koala Habitat ahead of the release of the draft strategy (including land in Joyner, Warner, Morayfield and Redcliffe) should be reinstated. Koalas are still living in these areas and / or using the areas to connect to other areas of habitat.
* There appears to be no corridors linking many of the Koala Priority Areas, resulting in patchy and fragmented habitat.
* Areas extensively planted with koala trees by the Moreton Bay community over the past 30 years should be recognised in the Koala Habitat mapping.
* Areas of Moreton Bay mapped previously as being of state environmental significance should be included as Koala Habitat, especially if ground-truthing evidence shows koala activity
* The proposal to let property owners have automatic rights to clear up to 500 m2 in Koala Habitat areas should be replaced with an impact assessment process.
* A moratorium on clearing koala trees in Koala Priority Areas should be implemented (with effective sanctions) until the Strategy and Koala Habitat mapping are finalised, particularly in Joyner and Warner where there are current unapproved development applications that will impact many koala and hundreds of habitat trees if they are approved.
* The use of financial offsets as a mechanism for property owners and developers to buy the right to destroy koala habitat is unacceptable.
* Analysis of overall gain/loss of koala habitat in south east Queensland should recognise that areas close to the coast such as Moreton Bay can sustain more koalas per hectare than other areas further west where it is hotter and drier.

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