

# Changes to SEQ koala habitat regulations since August 2020



South-East Queensland Local Governments added 24,500 hectares to 'koala habitat protection areas' on 29 August 2020.

Over 716,000ha is regulated for koala conservation in SEQ.

Check your property vegetation map to see if this affects you?

Version: 2020-2

## What is "koala habitat"?

An area of vegetation where koalas live that includes a koala habitat tree (for feeding and shelter), or areas of koala habitat trees suitable for koalas, including cleared areas used by koalas to cross between these areas.

- In August 2020, Local Governments included 24,500 ha of "Locally Refined Koala Habitat Areas" LRKHA into Queensland's koala habitat maps. Local and state governments will transition LRKHA into core koala habitat areas KHA over a two-year period. LRKHA are regulated by local government.
- There are no current changes to other Koala Habitat Areas released by Queensland Government in February 2020. This includes Koala Priority Areas KPA, Koala Habitat Areas KHA and Koala Habitat Restoration Areas KHRA. The next annual update for koala habitat maps is due in April 2021. Updates will include koala sightings by community residents.
- ALL clearing is prohibited in Koala Priority Areas KPAs. This includes Locally Refined Koala Habitat Areas LRKHA and Category X areas within a KPA. Clearing can still occur in existing PMAV areas, if locked in prior to 7 February 2020.
- Clearing exemptions within a KHA for Category B, C and R regulated vegetation include a one-off development footprint up to 500m<sup>2</sup>, firebreaks and fire management lines, removal of dangerous trees, clearing for a fence or road, native forest practice and essential management. Full list of exemptions available in Schedule 24 of the Planning Regulation 2017 <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/sl-2017-0078>
- If you are using one of the Accepted Development Vegetation Clearing Codes (ADVCC), check the code for the koala framework requirements.
- If a KHA or LRKHA is mapped incorrectly, you can request to amend or revoke the area. For example, if the mapped area does not contain native woody vegetation or the type of vegetation is not a koala habitat regional ecosystem. <https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/wildlife/animals/living-with/koalas/mapping/map-amendment-requests>

**Koalas** are listed as vulnerable under state and federal legislation. On 7 February 2020, the Queensland Government Department of Environment and Science DES strengthened regulations for koala habitat areas KHA in south east Queensland (SEQ). KHA are assessed separately to vegetation management and essential habitat.

### **Koala Priority Areas KPA and Koala Habitat Areas KHA in south east Queensland.**

Different protection requirements for impacts on koala habitat apply to these areas. Maps and more details are available from <https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/wildlife/animals/living-with/koalas/mapping/legislation-policy> and [https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/211735/seq-koala-habitat-mapping-factsheet.pdf](https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0019/211735/seq-koala-habitat-mapping-factsheet.pdf).

AgForce Queensland Farmers provides members with an annual GeoPDF property map or you can request a free online property map of koala habitat areas from this Qld Govt website:

<https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/land/management/vegetation/maps/map-request>.

Koala habitat mapping is also available via the Queensland Globe <https://qldglobe.information.qld.gov.au/>.

- Qld Government assesses vegetation clearing in koala habitat areas (green areas on map).
- Local government will assess applications not involving clearing within the Koala Priority Areas (in accordance with Schedule 11 of the Planning Regulation 2017).
- Core koala habitat areas (dark green on the map) are best quality habitats, based on modelled climate, vegetation and koala sighting records.
- The Chief Executive from the Dept of Environment and Science determines koala habitat areas.
- Non-statutory restoration areas identify “koala habitat restoration areas” of high conservation value and low threats (orange areas on a koala habitat map).

**Koala Habitat Tree** is a koala feeding tree (Genus *Corymbia*, *Melaleuca*, *Lophostemon* or *Eucalyptus*) or shelter tree (Genus *Angophora* or other genera)

### **Regulatory requirements for clearing native vegetation in KPA and KHA**

**Clearing of native woody vegetation is prohibited in Koala Priority Areas KPA** (criss-cross brown hatches on the Koala Conservation Plan Map (Figure 1). Exemptions include assessable development or reconfiguring a lot within koala broad-hectare areas, exempted developments including State forests / timber reserves or developments approved prior to 7 February 2020.

**Clearing in Koala Habitat Areas KHA outside the KPA areas is Assessable Development**, unless an exempted activity, extractive industry approved prior to 7 Feb 2020 or an approved activity within the koala broad-hectare areas.

**Exemptions for clearing koala habitat** are listed in Schedule 24 of the [Planning Regulation 2017](https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/inforce/current/sl-2017-0078) <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/inforce/current/sl-2017-0078>. These include development approvals and clearing Category X on a PMAV made before 7 February 2020. Certain clearing activities are exempt without the need to notify or seek approval under the vegetation management framework.

**Low risk clearing that is not authorised by exempt clearing works in Schedule 24, requires prior notification under the [Accepted development vegetation clearing codes](#) ADVCC and the clearing activity must comply with practices in the relevant code.** ADVCC's include clearing for infrastructure, native forest practice, weed control, necessary environmental clearing, extractive industries, and managing regrowth.

#### **For SEQ Koala Habitat Areas**

**Sequential clearing of koala habitat trees in SEQ Koala District A or B** (as per Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2017).

- Clear in stages, with at least a 12-hour gap in clearing activity (If 6ha or less, only clear up to 50 per cent. If more than 6ha area, up to 3ha or 3 per cent of the area).
- Provide appropriate habitat links during clearing.
- Do not clear a habitat tree if a koala is present.
- A skilled koala spotter is required if habitat tree diameter is greater than 10cm at 1.3m above the ground.

#### **Changes to Regrowth Code**

- New notification and clearing limitations (10ha per lot, renotify and self-audit).
- No clearing for agriculture.
- No clearing which will cause disconnection between two or more environmentally sensitive areas 100m in width.

#### **Changes to Weeds Code**

- New notification and clearing limitations (10ha per lot, renotify and self-audit).
- Weed management methods need to be necessary and reasonable.
- Can only clear immature koala habitat trees, if area is managed to support natural regeneration of koala habitat trees.

#### **Changes to Necessary Environmental Clearing Code**

- Allows clearing of mature trees and koala habitat trees if retention prevents flood preparation works.
- Avoid or minimise clearing in koala habitat areas for channel diversion, or not to exceed the 10m width limit and a koala offset is secured.
- Areas to be managed to support natural regeneration of koala habitat trees.
- Avoid or minimise clearing in essential habitat. Clearing width limits are 5 metres (for a lot less than 5ha) or 10 metres (for a lot greater than 5ha) for linear infrastructure (fence, road, track) and development areas up to 500m<sup>2</sup> in Category B, C and R, unless a koala offset is secured.
- Cleared area for infrastructure, airstrip and extractive industry up to 500 m<sup>2</sup> in Category B or C areas.
- Avoid clearing in Category B for an extractive industry. Koala offset may be required for Cat C, R or X.
- Diversion of a watercourse or drainage feature in Category C up to 500m<sup>2</sup>.

**For larger scale clearing activities, development approval (DA) under the *Planning Act 2017* is required.** A development application must demonstrate how koala habitat and koala safe movement will be maintained. The “**Assessment Benchmarks in relation to Koala Habitat in SE Qld**”

[https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0024/102858/koala-assessment-benchmarks-guideline.pdf](https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0024/102858/koala-assessment-benchmarks-guideline.pdf) and “**State Code 25: Development in SE Qld koala habitat areas**”

[https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/102836/koala-state-development-assessment-provisions-sdap-guideline.pdf](https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/102836/koala-state-development-assessment-provisions-sdap-guideline.pdf) provide a range of ‘acceptable solutions’ to ‘Performance Outcomes’ to ensure clearing applications minimise impact on koala habitat.

#### **More information on koala mapping, legislation and policies**

Queensland Department of Environment and Science website

<https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/wildlife/animals/living-with/koalas/mapping>.

Phone 13 QGOV (13 74 68) or email: [SEQKoalaStrategy@des.qld.gov.au](mailto:SEQKoalaStrategy@des.qld.gov.au).

## **NATIONAL**

### ***Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)***

#### **self-referral guidelines**

Koalas are listed as a vulnerable species under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC)*. New clearing activities that are likely to have significant effect on koalas may need to be self-referred to the Australian Government for EPBC assessment. For example, significant effect may be the loss of 2 to 20ha of high-quality koala habitat critical for their survival, depending on proposed actions and mitigation measures. EPBC referral guidelines are available from

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/epbc-act-referral-guidelines-vulnerable-koala> or phone 1800 803 772.

**Figure 1: The SEQ Koala Conservation Plan Map for koala district A, showing koala priority areas KPA, habitat areas KHA and locally refined koala habitat areas LRKHA.**

