

Coomera Connector Stage 1

(Second M1)

Environmental management

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) is committed to managing its road network in a manner that enhances environmental outcomes for natural, social and built environments.

Protecting the environment is an important part of planning for new road and infrastructure projects. To ensure the Coomera Connector is designed and delivered in an environmentally sensitive manner, TMR has been working with a range of subject matter experts and stakeholders.

For several years, extensive environmental investigations have been underway along the Stage 1 corridor, including:

-  wildlife surveys to determine habitat values for native fauna, including koalas
-  flora surveys to determine the presence of protected plants
-  aquatic ecology surveys and water quality monitoring, including a two-year survey within and adjacent to Coombabah Lake.

The information and data collected from these surveys has been used to determine what measures will be taken to meet legislative requirements and investigate opportunities to enhance important wildlife corridors.

Environmental approvals

Environmental approvals for Coomera Connector Stage 1 were progressed with the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).



Koala health check undertaken by EVE veterinary officers as part of the Coomera Connector koala tagging and monitoring program (Image courtesy Endeavour Veterinary Ecology).

TMR developed a Public Environment Report (PER) addressing the requirements under the EPBC Act for impacts on Matters of National Environmental Significance.

TMR is also working closely with the Queensland Department of Environment and Science as well as the City of Gold Coast to ensure all state and local government legislative requirements are addressed.



Purley, a rare, naturally genetic blue and brown eyed koala, found in the project corridor (Image courtesy Endeavour Veterinary Ecology).

Protecting koalas

Recognising the importance of koala populations, TMR has developed a Koala Management Plan (KMP) for the Stage 1 project.

The KMP guides the design and implementation of measures to help understand the extent and health of the koala population in the vicinity of the Coomera Connector with the aim of ensuring koalas are appropriately protected during the project's construction and operation.

Conservation strategies forming the basis of the KMP include:

- undertaking koala capture, health checks and ongoing monitoring to provide baseline data on koala populations and home ranges
- relocating koalas found within the Coomera Connector corridor to Pimpama River Conservation Area (PRCA)
- ensuring koala populations already in the PRCA are healthy
- best practice fauna movement infrastructure to facilitate the movement of koalas in wildlife corridors
- working with all levels of government to establish potential future koala habitat areas (offsets) and maintaining important wildlife corridors.



Wildlife protection initiatives

The Coomera Connector Stage 1 design includes new and upgraded fauna passages to assist wildlife in moving around their natural habitats, and fauna fencing will be installed to reduce the risk of vehicle strikes on the new motorway.

Adopting innovations from other TMR projects will form part of the design, including:

- installing fauna exclusion shields to deter wildlife from climbing noise barriers
- installing clear acrylic panels on noise barriers and pedestrian safety screens that include some form of pattern to minimise the risk of bird strikes
- planting low-flowering vegetation in the centre median of the motorway to minimise fauna attraction to these plants.

TMR recognises that during vegetation clearing and construction works there can also be considerable impacts to wildlife. As a result of ongoing consultation with local environmental advocates, TMR has ensured contractors for each package are well-informed of their legislative responsibilities and has shared with them a draft Wildlife Spotter and Catcher Code of Practice. The Code—written by the Director of Endeavour Veterinary Ecology (EVE), Dr Jon Hanger—provides best practice guidelines for contractors to follow during their works program, and at the time of tendering TMR strongly recommended they adopt the Code's practices.



Artist's impression: fauna passage.

Vegetation management

In addition to native vegetation being key to the Gold Coast's biodiversity, TMR understands the value mature trees and dense vegetation provide to local communities and the benefits they provide for improved air quality, screening and general amenity. However, for a project the size of the Coomera Connector, vegetation clearing is unavoidable. Despite the challenges, TMR is committed to retaining and planting as much vegetation as possible.

It is important to note that TMR must follow the same legislative processes as commercial developers when assessing environmental impacts and cultural heritage significance on construction activities, including obtaining all necessary vegetation and tree clearing permits. Tree clearing of significant flora species will not begin until all legislative approvals are in place.

To re-establish vegetation screening, embankments may be landscaped with native and other appropriate species of trees, shrubs and other ground cover. However, a significant portion of new plantings will include younger saplings and tube stock to give the plants a better opportunity to adapt and grow in their new soil conditions.

Air quality

One of the primary objectives of the Coomera Connector project is to alleviate congestion on the Pacific Motorway. It is expected that decreasing traffic congestion will help improve air quality emissions in general.

While this may help address concerns about pollution from future traffic growth, the Coomera Connector includes a significant commitment to improving active transport connections for pedestrians and bike riders, which will increase opportunities for more active and environmentally-friendly travel.

As part of Coomera Connector Stage 1, two new air quality monitoring base stations were installed—one at the Coomera Sports Park on Beattie Road, Coomera and the other within the Park n Ride facilities at the Parkwood Light Rail station on Smith Street, Parkwood. Air quality monitoring and data collection will be ongoing.

Further information on how TMR manages the effects of road traffic on local air quality, and ensures legislative compliance, can be found in the 'Road Traffic Air Quality Management Manual' on the TMR website at www.tmr.qld.gov.au.

Water quality

Water quality management is a necessary environmental responsibility on all projects. Parts of Coomera Connector Stage 1 will be heavily interacting with local waterways, so various measures will be in place throughout the project including:

- installing permanent water quality management measures such as swales and basins
- a surface water and groundwater monitoring program
- retaining natural vegetation and buffers near waterways
- installing gross pollutant barriers
- a stormwater management plan and erosion and sediment control management plan.

Need more information?

Residents and motorists are encouraged to subscribe to the free SMS and email traffic alert service to keep up-to-date on the Coomera Connector Stage 1 project.

To register, contact the project team on the details below:

- Phone:** 1800 568 978 (free call from any landline during business hours, 9am – 5pm, Mon to Fri)
- Email:** coomeraconnector@tmr.qld.gov.au
- Web:** www.tmr.qld.gov.au/coomeraconnector
- Mail:** Department of Transport and Main Roads
PO Box 442, Nerang QLD 4211

Interpreter and accessibility services

- Interpreter service:** 13 14 50
- TTY/voice calls:** 13 36 77 (ask for 13 23 80)
- Speak & Listen:** 1300 555 727 (ask for 13 23 80)
- SMS relay:** 0423 677 767 (ask for 13 23 80)
- Email:** helpdesk@relayservice.com.au (ask for 13 23 80)



Scan the QR Code to go directly to the Coomera Connector web page.



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