

MEDIA STATEMENT

23 April 2019

Peak Downs Highway gets koala friendly fencing

Wildlife fencing has been installed at Denison Creek on the Peak Downs Highway to help protect an Australian fauna icon – the koala.

The barrier fencing is designed to prevent koalas from entering the highway, and instead encourage them to cross under the road using the existing bridge.

Transport and Main Roads Director-General Neil Scales said the investment in conservation measures was important.

"When we are upgrading and maintaining the road network, we need to ensure it is done sustainably, and we are thinking of the broader picture," Mr Scales said.

"As part of the Eton Range Realignment Project, a study was completed as an environmental offset condition to mitigate any potential impacts on the koala population and help inform future management strategies.

"The koala research project, undertaken by CQUniversity, suggested wildlife barriers at particular locations could help reduce the number of koalas being injured or killed on the Peak Downs Highway between Nebo and Eton."

Mr Scales said the study recommendations were put action, with wildlife fencing installed at Denison Creek, and other locations would follow.

"The study findings have provided direction on how to help prevent koalas and other animals from being injured or killed at certain points along the highway," he said.

"Now the fencing has been installed, we will monitor it to determine its effectiveness for future investment."

Dr Alistair Melzer from CQUniversity said the study tracked koalas to understand habitat use, ranging behaviour and diet, and analysed road-kill records in relation to highway and landscape characteristics.

"The analysis and habitat classification revealed koala road-kills were not random, but clustered around discrete parts of the landscape, streams and nearby alluvial flats in association with high-value koala habitat," Dr Melzer said.

"These road-kill blackspots allow for targeted intervention to prevent koalas crossing the highway at these high-risk locations.

"The study indicated some existing bridges and culverts could be used as wildlife underpasses, with the addition of wildlife barrier fencing to guide fauna to the entrance."

Dr Melzer said the wildlife fencing would have a two-fold outcome, helping improve both individual koala welfare and conserve the overall population.

"The infrastructure aims to reduce the number of koalas and other wildlife being injured or killed.

"We may see an increase in ecological connectedness across the highway with the species able to maintain genetic and social linkages across the landscape," he said.

"More broadly, the CQUniversity study defined the extent and importance of the Clarke-Connors Range koala population and provided guidance for future management.

"The study also recognised the significance of rangeland graziers in managing the koala habitat."

In addition to the barrier fencing, a dedicated fauna underpass is being built at Eton Range as part of the realignment project's environmental conditions.

The fauna underpass and fencing will help provide safe highway passage and will be in use once the overall project works are completed in late 2019.

For more information about the Eton Range Realignment Project and koala research, visit www.tmr.qld.gov.au/Projects/Name/E/Eton-Range-Peak-Downs-Highway/Eton-Range-Realignment-Koala-Research-Project

ENDS

Media contact:

TMR Media Unit, 3066 7060