

Eton Range Realignment Project

Peak Downs Highway – Koala Research

About the study

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) engaged CQUniversity to undertake a koala research study as part of environmental offset conditions for the Eton Range Realignment Project on the Peak Downs Highway.

The study aimed to learn more about the koala population of the Clarke-Connors Range, to develop strategies for future management, and assist TMR to determine where to install koala sensitive infrastructure along the Peak Downs Highway between Nebo and Eton.

The study commenced in August 2016 and field works concluded in August 2018.

Research findings

The study used GPS tracking collars, data collection and sighting records to identify where koalas frequently crossed the Peak Downs Highway between Nebo and Eton. It also studied the population as a whole, with the intention of determining suitable future management strategies.

Using this information, the researchers were able to recommend locations where wildlife fencing would be most helpful in reducing the number of koalas injured or killed on the highway.



Pictured: Koala seen adjacent to project site.

The **Clarke-Connors Range** extends 300 kilometres along the western boundary of the Mackay Whitsunday region, encompassing significant protected areas including Eungella and Homevale National Parks. The range is considered to support the most extensively connected koala population in Queensland.

TMR actions

TMR is putting the research recommendations into action by installing wildlife fencing at recommended locations along the Peak Downs Highway between Nebo and Eton.

The wildlife fencing is designed to prevent koalas from entering the highway, instead directing them through existing structures like large culverts or bridges.

Construction of barrier fencing at locations along the Peak Downs Highway will begin in 2019 and will be monitored to determine effectiveness.

In addition to the study, the design of the Eton Range Realignment Project was altered to include a dedicated fauna underpass and barrier fencing. The fauna underpass will be in use once the realignment project is completed in late 2019.

The Eton Range Realignment Project is a controlled action under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* due to potential impacts on koalas. The koala research project and design alterations were accepted by the Australian Department of Environment as approved offset conditions in March 2016.

For more information visit the project website: tmr.qld.gov.au/etonrange



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