

22.04 KOALA AND KOALA HABITAT PROTECTION

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22.04-1 Policy Basis

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Numerous land management issues affect the long-term survival of the koala in Ballarat. The 2002 Ballarat Community-based Koala Survey highlighted overwhelming support for and the importance that the Ballarat community places on koala conservation. Residents perceive that koala numbers are lower now than in the past, and have indicated that the main concerns to koala survival are: logging of native forests, housing developments, the removal of vegetation on private land and along roadsides, roaming dogs and the danger created by roads and vehicular traffic. Residents perceived the need to manage these issues by placing restrictions on dog ownership, improved traffic management, more tree planting and habitat restoration, tree preservation orders and stronger planning controls over urban development.

The Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management recommends that to provide for the long-term survival of koala populations within the City of Ballarat, it is imperative to recognise the vital role that the City's native vegetation plays. The Plan states that native vegetation is a habitat and food source for koalas, particularly where Manna Gum and Messmate Stringybark tree species are present.

This policy is aligned with the Environmental Significance Overlay Schedule 5 and has been introduced to manage these koala conservation issues, insofar as they can be dealt with through the Ballarat Planning Scheme.

22.04-2 Objectives

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- To protect koala habitat areas from any development that would compromise the quality or integrity of existing koala habitat.
- To ensure that any development within or adjacent to koala habitat areas occurs in an environmentally sensitive manner.
- To incorporate the restoration of koala habitat as a component of developments where restoration is identified as required by the Ballarat Koala Habitat Planning Map.
- To ensure that any development maintains existing connectivity between areas of koala habitat and minimises threats to safe koala movement between such areas.

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It is policy to:

- Ensure development will not result in the removal or degradation of native vegetation within Preferred Koala Habitat as identified on Map 1 of this policy and mapped by the Environmental Significance Overlay Schedule 5.
- Maximise retention and minimise degradation of native vegetation within Supplementary Koala Habitat, Habitat Buffers and Habitat Linking Areas as identified on Map 1 to Clause 22.04.
- Discourage the removal of Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus vimindis*) and Messmate Stringybark (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) which are preferred Koala Food Trees.
- Make provision, where appropriate, for the restoration of koala habitat areas, including Habitat Buffers and Habitat Linking Areas over mainly cleared land and other vegetation.
- Make provision for the long term management and protection of koala habitat, including both existing and restored habitat.

- Minimise barriers to koala movement by providing appropriate fencing.
- Ensure that developments either specify that they will be dog free, or set out the manner in which dogs will be managed on the subject land to minimise contact between koalas and dogs, including the consideration of proposed fencing and location of dog compounds.

Buildings and works requirements

Despite the above policies, the removal of koala habitat may be approved for the purpose of constructing buildings and associated works within a defined building envelope/works area **only if** the applicant can demonstrate that:

- The building envelope/works area **cannot** be located elsewhere on-site to avoid and/or minimise the need for removal of native vegetation within areas of koala habitat;
- In the case of a plan of subdivision, it has been designed so as to **retain and enhance** koala habitat on the site and is consistent with the objectives of this policy; and
- Koala survey methods in accordance with *Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management Appendix 4 – Guidelines for Habitat Assessments of the Ballarat City Council* have been used to determine the most appropriate location for the building envelope.

Fencing

Fencing in areas of or adjoining areas of koala habitat must:

- Provide a minimum of 300 mm between the bottom of the fence and ground level to allow koalas to move underneath the fence;
- Facilitate easy climbing by koalas. This could include use of:
 - chain mesh fences; or
 - solid fences with timber posts on both sides and spaced at regular intervals; or
 - open post and rail; or
 - post and wire fences, without the use of barbed wire.
- Effectively contain dogs in and exclude koalas from a dog compound. Dog compounds should be restricted to a location within a designated building envelope/works area and away from trees, to prevent koalas from entering the compound.

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References

Ballarat City Council Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management Part 1 and 2 2006, Rolf Schlagloth & Hedley Thomson, 2006.

Map 1 to Clause 22.04

