



Australian Government

**BUILDING OUR FUTURE**



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## **Ballina Koala Plan – frequently asked questions**

**The NSW and Australian governments are jointly funding the Woolgoolga to Ballina Pacific Highway upgrade. As part of the project's Conditions of Approval, the Ballina Koala Plan has been submitted to the federal Department of the Environment for consideration and approval. This document aims to answer frequently asked questions about the plan and Population Viability Analysis (PVA) report.**

### **What is the Ballina Koala Plan and PVA report?**

As part of the Conditions of Approval for the project, Roads and Maritime Services is required to demonstrate impact to the Ballina koala population (west of Wardell) will be acceptable before building can start in the area known as section 10, which starts at Broadwater and finishes at Coolgardie, south of Ballina.

A Population Viability Analysis (PVA), for a 50-year timeframe has been carried out to demonstrate 'the long-term viability of the Ballina koala population, taking into account the impacts resulting from the road upgrade in section 10'. This work is now complete and forms part of a Ballina Koala Plan.

The plan has been endorsed by the Koala Expert Advisory Committee (KEAC) and independently reviewed by a PVA expert. The plan has been submitted to the federal Department of the Environment for consideration and is now publically available.

More information about the [Ballina Koala Plan](#), [PVA process](#) and KEAC can be found at the project's web page [www.rms.nsw.gov.au/koala](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/koala).

### **Who has contributed to the Ballina Koala Plan, PVA report and additional investigations?**

Development of the Ballina Koala Plan and PVA report has involved input and advice from experts and researchers from several institutions and scientific organisations including:

- Niche Environment and Heritage Pty Ltd
- Ecosure Pty Ltd
- Biolink Ecological Consultants
- Office of the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer
- Australian Museum
- University of New South Wales
- Australian National University
- Southern Cross University
- University of Sydney
- Queensland University
- University of the Sunshine Coast
- NSW Office of Environment and Heritage
- NSW Environmental Protection Agency

We would like to acknowledge the input and cooperation by Friends of the Koala in supplying genetic information and mortality data to help inform the investigations and management plans.

## What are the PVA outcomes?

The PVA results indicate:

- The Ballina koala population will decline over time with or without the road
- The PVA found the Ballina koala population will decline with or without the presence of an (unmitigated) upgraded highway due to koala deaths on roads other than the Pacific Highway, disease and predators
- The Woolgoolga to Ballina upgrade has the potential to cause a small adverse impact on the population, but this can be offset by implementing additional mitigation measures to address koala deaths on existing roads neighbouring the project
- The modelling suggests that the effect of this additional mitigation could improve the situation for koalas above current projections without the upgrade
- Roads and Maritime, other authorities and the community can significantly improve the viability of the Ballina koala population through implementing a range of other measures, including addressing koala mortalities on road networks outside the scope of this project, and predator control.

## What additional measures will Roads and Maritime implement to reduce impact on the Ballina koala population?

Roads and Maritime has committed to a fully-closed highway by fencing the corridor and providing enhanced connectivity structures for animals to safely cross over or under the road.

As a result of the PVA outcomes, we will also install additional fencing at two known hotspots for koala mortalities on existing roads neighbouring the project, including part of Wardell Road and part of the existing Pacific Highway north of Wardell to Coolgardie. The value of these additional measures on roads neighbouring the project reducing the number of koala road kills by as little as four animals per year, was clearly shown in the PVA modelling.

## What else can be done to help protect the Ballina koala population?

The PVA found there are significant opportunities to reduce koala deaths in the area which would need the involvement of and support by local and state authorities, along with the wider community.

According to the PVA outcomes, koala deaths on other local and state roads in the region outside the upgrade project footprint are impacting on the long-term viability of the Ballina population. Reduction in koala deaths on these roads would help improve the future viability of the local koala population. The PVA indicates domestic dogs and disease are also a threat to koalas in the study area. The local community and other government agencies have an important role in developing and implementing appropriate strategies to control predators and disease.

Roads and Maritime will share information gathered in the PVA studies with relevant local, state and community stakeholders to help inform future management strategies.

## What are the next steps?

The Ballina Koala Plan has been submitted to the federal Department of the Environment for consideration. Major work in section 10 cannot start until the plan is approved. Roads and Maritime is meeting with key stakeholders to discuss the PVA outcomes and share information gathered in the additional investigations. More information about the [Ballina Koala Plan](#), and [PVA process](#) can be found at the project's web page [www.rms.nsw.gov.au/koala](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/koala).



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