

Environment

Taking action

Key features of the strategy to be implemented to manage the koala population in section 10 on the Woolgoolga to Ballina upgrade include:

- ✓ Engaging experts to collect more data on the Ballina koala population, undertake the population viability analysis (see below) and peer review the analysis
- ✓ Establishing an expert panel – the makeup of which was revealed in January 2015 – to provide advice to the Minister for Roads and Freight on modelling work and mitigation measures for the Ballina koala population
- ✓ Installing exclusion fencing and building connectivity structures early, before major work starts, to minimise the risk of direct construction-related deaths
- ✓ Increasing the number of animal crossings suitable for koalas by more than 400 per cent to that proposed in the December 2013 Submissions and Preferred Infrastructure Report
- ✓ Planting about 130 hectares of koala food trees on Roads and Maritime-owned land
- ✓ Developing an overarching koala management plan, to educate and guide workers on the importance of appropriately managing koala incidents during the pre-construction, major work and post-opening phases
- ✓ Sharing information with key stakeholders including Ballina Shire Council and its reference group as well as the broader community.

Ballina Koala Plan

Roads and Maritime takes its obligations to protect the environment very seriously and wants to work with the community to get the best outcome for the koala and the Pacific Highway upgrade.

The final section of completing the Pacific Highway to a four lane divided highway, the 155 kilometre Woolgoolga to Ballina upgrade, has been approved by both the NSW and Federal governments. The approvals come with strict



Photo of a koala taken during pre-construction surveys on the Woolgoolga to Ballina project near Wardell

conditions about managing the project's impact on the environment, including the koala and other threatened species.

One federal condition requires Roads and Maritime demonstrate the impact to the Ballina koala population will be 'acceptable' before it starts building section 10, near Wardell. This will form part of a Ballina koala plan to ensure the best outcome for koalas in that section.

While this work is taking place, work can start on the other 142 kilometres of the upgrade.



A koala caught and later released during pre-construction surveys for the Woolgoolga to Ballina upgrade