




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR KALLANGUR

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Moreton Bay Rail Project, Koala Protection

 **Mr KING** (Kallangur—ALP) (12.08 pm): I rise to bring to the attention of the House the important work being done to protect and monitor our iconic koala population not only in my electorate but also in the electorates of those of my colleagues representing areas of Moreton Bay. We are all aware of how critical the Moreton Bay Rail Link is to the infrastructure needs of our region but hand in hand with this vital progression of work is the need to protect our koalas. It is with that in mind that the preservation of koalas in the rail corridor is a top priority for the Moreton Bay rail project. I wonder if we will get a steam train? I am pleased to advise that the Moreton Bay rail project is undertaking a cutting-edge koala tagging and monitoring program.

To date there have been 447 koalas incorporated into the program, with 182 currently under monitoring. Sadly, in recent history there were 232 mortalities, 15 missing in the field, 10 removed from the program and nine in care. This innovative program has ensured, however, that no koalas have been injured or killed as a result of clearing and the construction activities along the 14 kilometres of rail corridor.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads engaged Endeavour Veterinary Ecology to assist in delivering a koala tagging and monitoring program which was initiated in February 2013. There you go. How about that.

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): Order! Member for Kallangur, just a moment. Other speakers have been heard in silence. Can we stop the bantering, please. I want to hear the member for Kallangur.

Mr KING: Endeavour Veterinary Ecology were able to locate tagged koalas within the proposed clearing area each day, preventing accidental injury or death to koalas, allowing Transport and Main Roads and the construction contractor Thiess to comply with legislative requirements in relation to koala protection. In addition, it allowed for the clearing program to move quickly and smoothly through areas where koalas were not present. This initiative demonstrates the project is going beyond standard practice by collecting accurate field data specific to the local koala population. This process was not only used to help develop the rail design and strategically inform the location of fauna crossings, it has been invaluable during the clearing activities.

In addition to the tagging and monitoring program, 60 koalas captured as part of the tagging and monitoring program were included in the University of the Sunshine Coast led chlamydia vaccine trial. In the trial 30 animals received the vaccine and 30 remained unvaccinated as a control group. All 60 koalas were fitted with radio collars so they could be monitored. In October 2014 scientists at the

University of the Sunshine Coast celebrated the world's first successful field trial of a vaccine against chlamydia in koalas. We should be celebrating that. All this could not be done without the assistance of all parties involved in the rail construction.

As a result of data from the initial program this has now expanded to include a koala translocation program with monitoring to be completed in late 2016. This important work is made more so as our environment and heritage protection minister recently announced the koala will soon be listed as vulnerable across our state. Currently koalas are only listed as vulnerable in South-East Queensland. Our government has accepted the recommendation of the Species Technical Committee which is an independent panel of scientists and has lifted the conservation status of the koala. Our koala is an iconic species which faces many threats, including climate change, habitat reduction, disease, motor vehicle strike and dog attacks. This decision will be welcomed by koala lovers and conservationists and brings renewed focus to the koala's plight.

All of this highlights the importance of the work that is being carried out with our koalas in the Moreton Bay area on the Moreton Bay Rail Link project. Moreton Bay Rail Link will deliver for the people of Queensland a 12.6 kilometre dual track passenger rail line between Petrie and Kippa-Ring, including six new rail stations at Kallangur, Murrumba Downs, Mango Hill, Kinsellas Road, Rothwell and Kippa-Ring. The \$988 million required has been provided jointly by the Australian government, the Queensland government and the Moreton Bay Regional Council. The project is well underway and is on track to be delivered by mid-2016. It is great news for the community. It is also great news that we are ensuring our koalas are as safe as possible now and into the future.