Joint Media Statement

22 May 2017

Koala Fencing Contract Awarded for Woolgoolga to Ballina Upgrade

- Contract awarded to provide 10 kilometres of koala fencing on Woolgoolga to Ballina section of Pacific Highway upgrade
- Fencing will reduce koala deaths from road strikes during major work
- Ecologists will carry out pre-clearing surveys to identify koalas within the project corridor

A 10-kilometre stretch of new koala fencing will be built as part of the Woolgoolga to Ballina Pacific Highway upgrade to help keep local populations safe during and after construction work on the project.

Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Darren Chester said the contract to provide the fencing had been awarded to Coleman’s Group (Aust) Pty Ltd, and was just one of a number of measures being put in place to protect koalas.

“The Pacific Highway upgrade between Woolgoolga and Ballina is the nation’s biggest regional infrastructure project, with the highway on track to be fully duplicated by 2020. As part of the main civil works package, new koala fencing will be put in place as well as fauna connectivity structures to help native wildlife safely cross the new highway,” Mr Chester said.

“These types of projects prove that we can invest in world class infrastructure and protect native wildlife at the same time – a win-win situation for motorists, residents and the local environment.”

New South Wales Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight Melinda Pavey said fencing would be installed prior to major work along sections of Wardell Road and the existing Pacific Highway between Wardell and Coolgardie to help reduce koala deaths from road strikes during construction.

“Koala specific fauna fencing will be installed on both sides of the new highway at key koala population areas before the upgrade opens to traffic,” Mrs Pavey said.

“About 133 combined and dedicated structures for koalas are planned for the 155 kilometre upgrade, 26 of which are in this area, next to koala hotspots and proposed habitat revegetation areas.

“Ecologists will carry out pre-clearing surveys to identify koalas within the project corridor, including checks by a koala detection dog. The ecologist will also be available during clearing activities and throughout the work.”

Federal Member for Page Kevin Hogan said the Woolgoolga to Ballina project team was targeting a ‘zero harm’ approach to managing koalas during construction of the Woolgoolga to Ballina Pacific Highway upgrade.
“As part of this commitment, all workers will be inducted and trained in koala awareness and management with clear protocols and procedures on how to manage koala incidents on work sites,” Mr Hogan said.

“More than 90,000 trees will also be planted as part of revegetating at least 130 hectares of new koala habitat in the area - this is in addition to the project’s overarching biodiversity offset ratio of preserving about four hectares of land for every one cleared, including for fencing.”

New South Wales Member for Clarence Chris Gulaptis said project vehicles would be restricted to lower speeds in an effort to prevent koala deaths from road strike in the area.

“Project vehicles will be restricted to 80 km/h while travelling on roads between Richmond River and Coolgardie Road, and 50 km/h on Old Bagotville West Road and Back Channel Road. A speed reduction from 100 km/h to 80 km/h has been implemented for the general public on Wardell Road and Old Bagotville Road, areas frequently used by koalas,” Mr Gulaptis said.

“The Woolgoolga to Ballina project team is committed to working with the community and stakeholders to protect wildlife along the Pacific Highway to ensure the highest level of biodiversity protection.”

The Australian and New South Wales governments are jointly funding the Woolgoolga to Ballina upgrade on an 80:20 basis. For more information on the project visit www.rms.nsw.gov.au/W2B.