

# Implementing the Ballarat Koala Plan of Management through the Ballarat Planning Scheme Amendment C95



(Photo: M. Pigdon / Buninyong)

## What is the Proposal?

Ballarat City Council is proposing to amend the Ballarat Planning Scheme by including the Environmental Significance Overlay Schedule 5 – Koala Habitat overlay into the Ballarat Planning Scheme. The overlay will enable Council to consider development proposals for land (including subdivisions) in terms of their possible impacts on areas of koala habitat or areas frequented by koalas as identified in the Koala Management Plan. The overlay identifies areas of koala habitat and specifies when planning approval is required for development.

## What is the Ballarat Koala Plan of Management?

The Ballarat Koala Plan of Management has been designed to *provide for the long-term survival of koala populations within the City of Ballarat through the implementation of actions aimed at safeguarding the koala within its natural range within the City.*

The Plan aims to achieve this purpose through many measures, including:

- ❖ Evaluating and ranking koala habitat;
- ❖ Identifying the principal threats that adversely impact on koalas and koala habitat;
- ❖ Devising conservation strategies that address each of these threats;
- ❖ Identifying priority conservation areas and strategies to protect and link existing koala habitat;
- ❖ Restoring areas of degraded koala habitat;
- ❖ Providing guidelines and development standards to protect koala habitat;
- ❖ Promoting a balanced approach to koala conservation and urban development;
- ❖ Ensuring that adequate detail is provided with development applications and rezoning proposals;
- ❖ Effective public awareness and education programs;
- ❖ Identifying potential funding sources for implementation of the Plan;

- ❖ Effective monitoring of the Plan.

The Plan has been prepared jointly by the City of Ballarat and the Australian Koala Foundation as a major component of the on-going partnership initiative between the two organizations, which began in 2001.



(koala in plaster after collision with car Photo: R. Schlagloth)

## Why Is It Needed?

Unfortunately, the long-term survival of the koala in Australia is not secure. State governments and the Commonwealth as part of the National Koala Conservation Strategy (ANZECC 1998) have expressed their concern for the long-term viability of Australia's koalas. Further, the Victorian Government encourages all councils with koala habitat to work together with the Australian Koala Foundation to map koala habitat within their municipality and to introduce measures to protect these areas through the local planning system (DSE 2004).

Worldwide, the koala is probably the most recognized of Australia's wildlife species. To see a koala is important to a large proportion of both domestic and international tourists in Australia. The value of the koala as a tourism icon for Australia in 1996 has been estimated at \$1.1 billion.

Within Ballarat, the Ballarat Community-based Koala Survey undertaken in 2002

indicated overwhelming support for koala conservation within the City. There was a general indication that residents perceived koala numbers to be lower today than in the past. The main concerns to koala survival, as expressed by the respondents to the survey, were logging of native forests, housing developments and the removal of vegetation on private land and along roadsides. Roaming dogs and roads were also perceived as threats to koala safety.

These responses suggest that the community has concerns about the environment in general, in addition to issues that relate specifically to koala conservation.

### **What is the Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO)?**

The ESO provides the opportunity for Council to assess developments in terms of their possible impacts on identified environmental characteristics or environmental assets of land, such as important areas of native vegetation, water bodies or fauna habitat.

The ESO is shown on the Planning Scheme maps over land that has been studied and identified for its environmental significance. The ESO functions in addition to other planning scheme controls, such as land use zones. Schedules to the ESO can provide additional site-specific or feature-specific requirements. The proposed Schedule 5 specifies that planning approval will be required to construct buildings, carry out works, to remove vegetation (especially manna Gums and Messmate Stringybark trees) and to subdivide land.

### **How Does It Function?**

Where land is affected by the ESO, a planning permit is generally required for all

types of development. Planning applications will be required to submit information including an assessment of the koala habitat, details of the vegetation to be removed or retained and building envelopes. The ESO Schedule 5 contains the full list of information required.

### **Why It Is Needed to Help Implement the Ballarat Koala Plan of Management**

Being able to assess development proposals in the context of the Plan enables both Council and applicants to consider the best ways to design a development to meet the objectives of the Plan – the key one being to maintain a healthy koala population within the City.

Assessing the suitability of building designs, proposals for native vegetation removal, landscaping, intensity of development and species selection for re-vegetation are some of the matters that the Amendment will require Council and applicants to take into account in cases where ESO Schedule 5 applies.

### **What Else is Being Done to Implement the Ballarat Koala Plan of Management?**

Some of the other actions being taken to implement the Plan both by Council and the Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) include:

- ❖ Extensive community-supported revegetation programs;
- ❖ Monitoring of koala numbers and koala injuries;
- ❖ Establishment of the Koala Plan of Management Implementation Committee;
- ❖ Community education in schools & with community groups through the Ballarat Koala Liaison Officer;

- ❖ Extensive publicity in Australia & overseas about the koala in Ballarat through AKF.

### **Who Can I Talk to & Where do I get more Information about the Koala Plan of Management & the Amendment?**

The complete Koala Plan of Management is available on Council's web site at [www.ballarat.vic.gov.au](http://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au)

### **How Can I Comment on the Amendment?**

The amendment is now on exhibition for public comment. Submissions must be in writing and sent to:

Manager Strategic Planning  
Ballarat City Council  
PO Box 655  
BALLARAT VIC 3353

The closing date for submissions is **Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2006**.

### **How Can I Be More Involved in Assisting with Implementation of the Plan?**

There are great opportunities to be involved in activities such tree planting projects, working with overseas visitors, monitoring the koala population and gaining additional knowledge that can be passed on to others.

For details, contact:

Rolf Schlagloth  
Koala Liaison Officer, Ballarat (AKF)  
City of Ballarat  
P O Box 655;Ballarat, 3353

Ph: 5320 7406  
Email: [rolf.akf@ballarat.vic.gov.au](mailto:rolf.akf@ballarat.vic.gov.au)