

Compliance Report - Bruce Highway Cooroy to Curra Section C (Traveston to Woondum)

December 2019 – December 2020

EPBC Approval 2014/7394

January 2021



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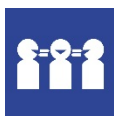
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Document control options

Departmental approvals

Refer to the appropriate Risk Assessment Tool for relevant reviewer and approver

Date	Name	Position	Action required (Review/endorse/approve)	Due
07/01/2021	Brendan Clancy	Manager Delivery and Operations	Review and endorse	15/01/2021
15/01/2020	Hendrik Roux	District Director	Approve	15/01/2021

Risk level

- GACC major GACC minor High risk (but not GACC) Medium risk

Prepared by	Helen Stevenson
Title	Senior Environmental Officer
District & Region	Wide Bay Burnett District, Southern Queensland Region
Branch & Division	PDO
Project/program	Bruce Highway Cooroy to Curra (Section C: Traveston to Woondum)
Project number	WBYD-1142 232/10A/5
Project location	Gympie
Status	Revision 1
DMS ref. no.	450/01061

Proponent and Approved Action

Detail	Applicable details
EPBC Reference Number:	2014/7394
Project Name:	Bruce Highway Upgrade Cooroy to Curra (Section C: Traveston to Woondum)
Proponent:	Department of Transport and Main Roads
ABN:	39 407 690 291
Proposed Action:	To upgrade and re-align approximately 11.5 km of the Bruce Highway between the Traveston Road interchange and Woondum, south of Gympie, Queensland.
Location of the Action:	Between Traveston and Woondum, south of Gympie, South East Queensland
Reporting Period:	December 2019 – December 2020
Date Prepared:	January 2021

Declaration of Accuracy

In making this declaration, I am aware that sections 490 and 491 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act) make it an offence in certain circumstances to knowingly provide false or misleading information or documents. The offence is punishable on conviction by imprisonment or a fine, or both. I declare that all the information and documentation supporting this compliance report is true and correct in every particular. I am authorised to bind the approval holder to this declaration and that I have no knowledge of that authorisation being revoked at the time of making this declaration.

Signed

Full name Hendrik Roux

Position District Director

Organisation (please print including ABN/ ACN if applicable)

Department of Transport and Main Roads (ABN - 39 407 690 291)

Date 15/01/2021

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1. Introduction

The Bruce Highway Cooroy to Curra Section C (Traveston to Woondum) Project (herein referred to as 'the Project') undertaken by the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) was subject to approval under *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

The EPBC Act referral for the Project was submitted to the former federal Department of the Environment (DoE) (now Department of Environment and Energy (DEE)) for impacts to matters of national environmental significance (MNES) on the 3 December 2014. A decision on the assessment of the referral was delivered by the DoE on 7 January 2015 which determined the Project (the proposed action) to be a 'controlled action' due to the likelihood of significant impacts to MNES protected under Section 18 and 18A, Part 3 of the EPBC Act. Sections 18 and 18A relate to actions with significant impact on listed threatened species. The determination required the proposed action to be assessed by the submission of preliminary documentation. Approval for the Project with conditions was granted on 24 December 2015 (approval number EPBC 2014/ 7394).

Condition 12 of the approval requires that TMR prepares and publishes an annual report that demonstrates compliance with each of the conditions of the approval. This Compliance Report is prepared for the period from December 2019 to December 2020.

2. Description of Activity

2.1 Project location

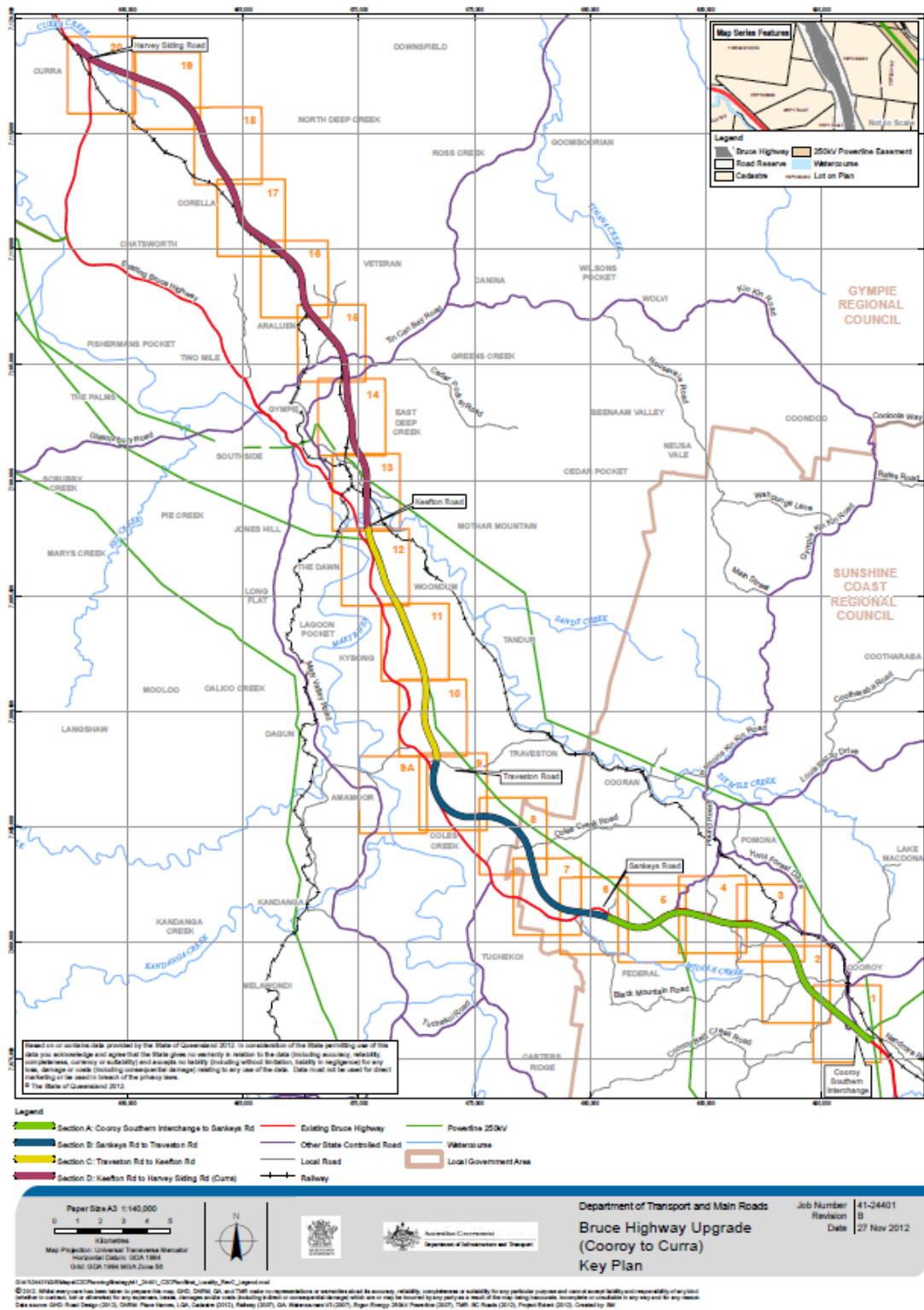
The Project is located south of the city of Gympie. It is the third section of a 61 km upgrade of the Bruce Highway between the townships of Cooroy and Curra to be constructed. The Project joins the completed Section B: Federal to Traveston in the south at the existing Traveston interchange and the yet to be constructed Section D: Woondum to Curra, in the north (refer to Figure 1).

2.2 Description of the Project

Key elements of the Section C Project include the following:

- Northbound and southbound ramps connecting from the proposed alignment to the existing roundabouts at the Traveston Road Interchange.
- 8.8 km's of four lane formation to accommodate four lanes of pavement and associated earthworks from Traveston Road Interchange to the proposed Woondum Road overpass with allowance for a future six-lane formation.
- 1.7 km's of upgrade of the existing Bruce Highway to the southern approach of the existing Six Mile Creek Bridge.
- Partial realignment and reconstruction of Woondum and Tandur Roads to accommodate the newly formed Bruce Highway.
- Grade separation at Tandur and Woondum Roads, with the highway bridging over the local roads.
- Three span bridge over Traveston Creek requiring realignment of 142 m of Traveston Creek.
- Two span bridge over Kybong Creek requiring the realignment of 173 m of Kybong Creek.
- Three span bridge over Cobbs Gully requiring realignment of 163.4m of Cobbs Gully.
- Three span bridge over Jackass Creek requiring realignment of 119m of Jackass Creek.

Figure 1 Plan of Cooroy to Curra Project



2.3 Matters of national environmental significance

The Project was assessed as having the potential to have a significant impact on the following MNES:

- Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*)
- Grey-headed flying-fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*)
- Mary River cod (*Maccullochella mariensis*)
- Mary River turtle (*Elusor macrurus*)
- White-throated snapping turtle (*Elseya albagula*)

Following the commencement of construction a wallum sedge frog (*Litoria olonburensis*) was identified during a survey in a dam on site. An exclusion zone and temporary frog fencing was installed around the dam whilst consultation with state and federal regulators was undertaken. Approval was granted by DoE to proceed with the works, in accordance with the Species Management Program prepared for the Project.

2.4 Project progress

The newly constructed highway was opened to traffic in early November 2017 and all construction activities were completed in mid-February 2018. Refer to Figure 2 and Figure 3 for images of the completed highway.

Figure 2 Completed Highway - Traveston Interchange north to Woondum



Figure 3 Completed Highway - Looking north to Woondum Interchange



3 Compliance with Approval Conditions

Table 1 provides details of the compliance with the Project's EPBC Act approval conditions.

Table 1 Compliance with EPBC Approval

Condition number	Condition	Is the Project compliant with this condition?	Evidence/ comments
1	The approval holder must not clear more than 45.9 hectares of habitat for Matters of National Environmental Significance located inside the Project area .	Compliant	As documented in the 2017 Compliance Report 35.30 ha of koala habitat was cleared for the Project. No further vegetation clearing was required to complete the construction phase.
2	To prevent impacts to water quality the approval holder must ensure that during normal flow events :	-	-
2 (a)	water quality monitoring is conducted in accordance with the Erosion and Sedimentation Control specifications, including the location of water sampling points, weekly for the duration of construction, and quarterly for five (5) years after the completion of construction;	Compliant	Water quality monitoring was conducted during construction on a weekly basis and following rain events greater than 10mm. The construction contractor recorded all results of the monitoring. Following the completion of the construction phase water quality monitoring has been undertaken quarterly on the following dates: - 18 December 2018 - 26 March 2019 - 20 June 2019 - 12 September 2019 - 17 December 2019 - 20 April 2020 - 7 July 2020 - 29 September 2020
2 (b)	There must be no construction related impacts to water quality between upstream and downstream water sampling points during construction and for five (5) years after the completion of construction	Compliant	There have been no construction or operational related impacts to water quality during the reporting period.
2 (c)	During construction any water released from sediment basins must not contain less than 50% dissolved oxygen.	Compliant	Water released from sediment basins during the construction phase contained more than 50% dissolved oxygen. All temporary sediment basins have now been decommissioned and there is nothing further to report for this condition.

3	During construction there must be no koala or grey-headed flying-fox mortality attributable to construction activities within the Project area , monitored daily.	Compliant	There have been no koala or grey-headed flying-fox mortalities attributable to construction activities within the Project area. The construction contractor undertook daily observations on site which included details of any interactions with fauna.
			The construction phase was completed in February 2018 and in this regard there is nothing further to report for this condition.
4	For the ongoing protection of the koala, the approval holder must implement protection measures including fencing and passages that must be designed, placed, maintained and actively monitored (at least monthly), to ensure that no koala mortality from vehicle strike occurs within the Project area and that the ability for koalas to cross safely is maintained where the road passes through Traveston State Forest, for the life of the approval.	Compliant	<p>The construction of the koala fence and fauna underpasses is complete.</p> <p>Ongoing monthly monitoring of the fence and fauna underpasses is being undertaken. Maintenance is being completed as required and to date includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weed spray • Grass cutting, brush cutting • Fence repairs following storm damage • Placement of rock fill in minor rills following storm events • Placement of rock in erosion prone areas.
			<p>A koala fatality occurred on the northern section of the highway and was reported to TMR the Mary River Catchment Committee (MRCCC) on 21 November 2019. A site inspection identified that all gates were closed, the koala fence was intact, no vegetation overhang was occurring, with a clear setback distance of vegetation present and there were no scour holes under the koala fence. Further investigations have identified that they may have been a potential access onto the highway through the fauna escape ramp that is located near the location of the koala fatality. The incident was reported to DEE on 3 December 2019 and no further direction from DEE has been received.</p>
			<p>An audit of all 13 fauna escape ramps present within the project area was undertaken to ascertain the condition of the ramps and if any defects existed. TMR has advised the local suitably qualified persons, MRCCC, that this is occurring and will update MRCCC on audit findings. As a result of the audit TMR retrofitted additional controls on all escape ramps, which include additional fencing and fauna exclusion bands on fencing to prevent access to the road corridor. TMR has notified DEE of the outcome of the audit findings and actions undertaken as a result of audit.</p>

5	If monitoring results indicate that outcomes in conditions 2-4 have not been achieved or are not likely to be achieved, the approval holder must:	Not-applicable	
5 (a)	investigate why the outcomes will not be achieved and determine if it is a result of the action, failure to maintain fencing and passages, or other circumstances;	Not-applicable	
5 (b)	where caused by the action, or failure to maintain fencing and passages, advise the Department within 14 days of receiving the monitoring results; and	Not-applicable	
5 (c)	develop and implement corrective actions, revised management measures and/or compensation measures in consultation with a suitably qualified expert and the Department.	Not-applicable	
6	To compensate for residual significant impacts to the koala, the approval holder must provide a financial contribution of \$663 000 over a five-year timeframe for research that will contribute to the better protection and long term conservation of the koala. The research must include, but is not limited to:	Compliant	The koala research project is in progress. A progressive payment structure has been implemented and completed.
6 (a)	provision of \$550 000 for a research program that will: measure the long-term effects of habitat fragmentation on koala health dynamics and how these may be mitigated by the introduction of corridors.	Compliant	The research project is in progress. Surveys have been undertaken of all accessible sites in the Gympie and Tinana areas. Genetic genotyping of scat samples has been undertaken and analysed. Aim 1 paper has been submitted to TMR for review, will be peer-reviewed and published by March 2022 as per DEE agreed extension of 12-month timeframe.
	measure the long-term recolonisation patterns of koalas into rehabilitated landscapes to assess whether rehabilitated landscapes can support sustainable populations of koalas.	Compliant	USC have surveyed a total of 248 sites since the start of the project, and modelling koala presence / absence and utilisation rates in function of landscape variables is in progress. Genetic analysis of scats is in progress.
6 (b)	provision of \$88 000 for the training of koala detection dogs to be used in the study.	Compliant	The koala scat detection dog, Baxter and fresh scat detection Dog, Billie, have continued to work in the field with qualified dog handlers (refer Figure 4).

The **approval holder** must provide the results of the research program to the **Department** and make them publically available, within twelve (12) months of completion of the research. The results of the research program must be peer reviewed. During the implementation of the research program, research results and progress must be reported to the **Department** annually.

Not-applicable

To date there are no results of the data analysis to publish. Three research papers were published in 2019 from findings from a number of projects including the Section C research project:

1. Cristescu, Romane H., Miller, Russell L., & Frère, Céline H. (2019) **Sniffing out solutions to enhance conservation: How detection dogs can maximise research and management outcomes, through the example of koalas.** *Australian Zoologist* (2019) <https://doi.org/10.7882/AZ.2019.030>
2. Cristescu, R.H., Scales, K.L., Schultz, A. J., Miller, R.L., Schoeman D.S., Dique, D., & Frère, C.H. **Environmental impact assessments can misrepresent species distributions: A case in Queensland Australia.** *Animal Conservation* 22 (2019) 314-323 .
3. Cristescu, R.H., Miller, R.L., Schultz, A.J. Hulse, L., Jaccoud. D., Johnston, S., Hanger, J., Booth, R. & Frère, C.H. **Developing non-invasive methodologies to assess koala population health through detecting *chlamydia* from scats.** <https://doi.org/10.1111/1755-0998.12999> *Molecular Ecology Resources* Volume 19, Issue 4 July 2019 pages 957-969.

The annual report for the research project was submitted to DEE in October 2019.

7	The approval holder must submit to the Department for the approval of the Minister , a research proposal detailing how condition 6 will be achieved, within 3 months of the date of the approval decision. The research proposal must address how the research proposal complies with Appendix A of the EPBC Act Environmental Offsets Policy and must include clear timeframes in which the financial contributions described in condition 6 will be paid.	Compliant	A research proposal was submitted to DoE on 19 February 2016 and was approved by the Minister on 27 March 2016.
8	For the protection of the koala , the approval holder must provide \$25 000 to the Gympie Regional Council to be used for the management of feral dogs within the council area within three (3) months of the date of this approval decision. Within ten (10) business days of provision of the funds the approval holder must advise the Department in writing that this has occurred.	Compliant	The funding has been provided and the program of work has been completed by Gympie Regional Council.

9	In the event that the research proposal referred to in condition 7 is not submitted within 12 months of the approval date, and approved; or the approved research program is not delivered to the satisfaction of the Minister within five (5) years of entering into the research program set out in condition 6, the approval holder must secure an appropriate direct offset to compensate for the loss of 45.9ha of habitat critical to the survival of the koala, in accordance with the Department's EPBC Act Offsets Policy and to be secured by a legally binding conservation protection mechanism.	Not applicable	
10	Within 10 days after the commencement of the action, the approval holder must advise the Department in writing of the actual date of commencement of the action.	Compliant	Notification was provided to DoE on the day the action commenced, 1 February 2016.
11	The approval holder must maintain accurate records substantiating all activities associated with or relevant to the conditions of approval and make them available upon request to the Department . Such records may be subject to audit by the Department or an independent auditor in accordance with section 458 of the EPBC Act, or used to verify compliance with the conditions of approval. Summaries of audits will be posted on the Department's website. The results of audits may also be publicised through the general media.	Compliant	All monitoring records were maintained by the construction contractor. The documentation has subsequently been transferred to TMR. The records are available for review at any time. DEE completed an audit of the project on 26 September 2018. The close out letter reported that " <i>during the site visit, officers did not identify any non-compliance with the EPBC Act approval conditions</i> ".
12	Within one (1) month of every 12 month anniversary of commencement , the approval holder must publish a report on their website addressing compliance with each of the conditions of this approval, including implementation of any management plans as specified in the conditions and effectiveness of fencing and passages in preventing koala mortality due to vehicle strike. Documentary evidence providing proof of the date of publication and non-compliance with any of the conditions of this approval must be provided to the Department at the same time as the compliance report is published.	Compliant	This report is the fifth compliance report for the Project and will be published on TMR's website.

13	Upon the direction of the Minister , the approval holder must ensure that an independent audit of compliance with the conditions of approval is conducted and a report submitted to the Minister . The independent auditor must be approved by the Minister prior to the commencement of the audit. Audit criteria must be agreed to by the Minister and the audit report must address the criteria to the satisfaction of the Minister .	Not applicable	To date, there has been no direction from the Minister to complete an independent audit.
14	If, at any time after two (2) years from the date of this approval, the approval holder has not commenced the action, then the approval holder must not commence the action without the written agreement of the Minister .	Not applicable	The Project commenced on 1 February 2016.
15	Unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the Minister , the approval holder must publish all reports and agreements referred to in these conditions of approval on their website. Each report and agreement must be published on the website within one (1) month of being approved by the Minister .	Compliant	The research proposal referred to in Condition 7 is published on TMR's website. The annual reports from USC are also published on the website.

Figure 4 Koala scat detection dogs trained as part of the Section C research project



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