

REPORTS THROUGH THE GENERAL MANAGER

REPORTS FROM THE DIRECTOR COMMUNITY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

a9 [CNR-CM] Koala Plan of Management

ORIGIN:

Director Community and Natural Resources

SUMMARY OF REPORT:

Council at its meeting of 20 October 2009 resolved as follows:

“that Council identifies the need to prioritise the feasibility study currently in process for costs involved for the proposed “Koala Plan of Management for Tweed Shire so that all developments with identified “Koala Habitat Sites” be subject to that Plan and that the report be included in the December Council Meeting”

The cost to undertake the comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (KPOM) is estimated at \$100,000. Council has lodged an application with Environmental Trust to fund \$80,000 of the project cost with the remainder to be sourced from Council's Biodiversity Program. To date there has been no advice provided from the Environmental Trust on the success or otherwise of the grant funding.

Notwithstanding this, the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) has recently advised that it will contribute \$30,000 toward a KPOM. In addition, Council officers have identified savings within the Biodiversity Program amounting to \$20,000. Together with the \$20,000 already set aside to support the Environmental Trust grant application, this provides a total of \$70,000 towards the KPOM.

Given the urgency expressed by the community and Council to prepare this plan it is recommended that Stage 1 of the KPOM be commenced immediately. This Stage will entail the collection and interpretation of data (Koala Habitat Study) required for the preparation of the Plan of Management itself (Stage 2).

There is a risk that commencement of the first stage could compromise the Environmental Trust grant application as this could be interpreted by the funding body as commencement of the project.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:-

- 1. Commences the Koala Habitat Study (Stage 1) in preparation for the Koala Plan of Management (Stage 2).**

- 2. Officers bring forward a future report on the creation of a Tweed Shire Koala Plan of Management Steering Committee.**
- 3. In accordance with its previous resolution (18 August 2009) consider an allocation in the 2010/2011 Budget to address any shortfall necessary to complete the Koala Plan of Management.**

REPORT:

Council at its meeting of 20 October 2009 resolved as follows:

“that Council identifies the need to prioritise the feasibility study currently in process for costs involved for the proposed “Koala Plan of Management for Tweed Shire so that all developments with identified “Koala Habitat Sites” be subject to that Plan and that the report be included in the December Council Meeting”

Prior to this on 18 August 2009 Council resolved:

“that Council considers a budget allocation of \$80,000 be made in the 2010/11 budget to prepare a KPOM should Council’s application for external funding to support the project be unsuccessful.”

The cost to undertake the comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (KPOM) is estimated at \$100,000. Council has lodged an application with Environmental Trust to fund \$80,000 of the project cost with the remainder (\$20,000) to be sourced from Council’s Biodiversity Program. To date there has been no advice provided from Environmental Trust on the success or otherwise of the grant funding.

Notwithstanding this, the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) has recently advised that it will contribute \$30,000 toward a KPOM. In addition, Council Officers have identified savings within the Biodiversity Program amounting to \$20,000. Together with the \$20,000 already set aside to support the Environmental Trust grant application, this provides a total of \$70,000 towards the KPOM.

Council has also received advice from Dr Steve Phillips and Team Koala that they could prepare a community-based KPOM under State Environmental Planning Policy 44 - Koala Habitat (SEPP 44). Whilst this approach is possible, recent discussions with Council Officers, DECCW, Team Koala and Friends of Koala concluded that Council should coordinate the KPOM guided by a community-based Steering Committee. The more conventional approach was adopted for a number of reasons:

1. A KPOM is only recognised if it is endorsed by Council and henceforth would require significant Council involvement.
2. If Team Koala or another community group were to coordinate the preparation of the KPOM they would need to take on an impartial chairing role and this may compromise their legitimate role as an advocate for koalas. Conversely, due to their record of advocacy they may not be seen as impartial.
3. Management of the process requires significant resources and interaction with the community and State Agencies. Council is best placed to project manage the preparation and implementation of a KPOM.

Given the urgency expressed by the community and Council to prepare this Plan it is recommended that Stage 1 of the KPOM be commenced immediately. This stage will entail the collection and interpretation of data (Koala Habitat Study) required for the preparation of the Plan of Management (Stage 2).

The preparation of a KPOM will require the creation of a Steering Committee that will guide the process and advise Council on the final plan. The terms of reference and membership of this committee will be prepared and be the subject of a future report to Council.

LEGAL/RESOURCE/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There is a risk that commencement of the first stage could compromise the grant funding application as this could be interpreted by the funding body as commencement of the project.

If Council is not successful in receiving grant funds for the project then as per the 18 August 2009 Council resolution Council will need to consider an allocation in the 2010/2011 Budget to meet the \$30,000 shortfall.

There are sufficient funds within the current budget to fund the Stage 1 works.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

Nil.

UNDER SEPARATE COVER/FURTHER INFORMATION:

To view any "non confidential" attachments listed below, access the meetings link on Council's website www.tweed.nsw.gov.au or visit Council's offices at Tweed Heads or Murwillumbah (from Friday the week before the meeting) or Council's libraries (from Monday the week of the meeting).

Nil.

