

# Minutes

## **Minutes of the Tweed Coast Koala Advisory Group Committee Meeting held Tuesday 24 May 2011**

### **Venue:**

Canvas and Kettle Room, Murwillumbah Civic Centre

### **Time:**

1:30pm

### **Present:**

Cr Dot Holdom (TSC), Mark Kingston (TSC), Sandy Pimm (TSC), Sally Jacka (TSC), Steve Jensen (DoP), Ralph Kraemer (community rep), Jennifer Hayes (Team Koala Inc), Rhonda James (community rep), Lorraine Vass (Friends of Koala Inc.), Anita Mudge (community rep).

### **Apologies:**

John Turbill (DECCW), Simon Graham (community rep).

### **1. Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Tweed Coast Koala Advisory Group Committee meeting held Tuesday 22 March 2011 be accepted as a true and accurate record of the proceedings of that meeting.

### **Business Arising:**

#### **2. CKPOM Consultant Brief**

The Brief was to four firms. Responses were received from Biolink and EcoLogical. Both were very good, although neither had a specialist landuse planner. Biolink were chosen as they have more local experience and their offer was at a significantly lower cost, which may allow the opportunity to engage a planner and/or pursue the Endangered Population nomination if deemed necessary.

Mark outlined Biolink's proposed methodology, which includes attendance at TCKAG meetings and workshops that may include other stakeholders.

Will aim to get a discussion paper to Group prior to next meeting.

#### **3. Bushfire Management**

Koalas are not recognised as an environmental asset in the Far North Coast Bushfire Risk Management Plan, despite other species being noted, such as Bush Stone Curlew.

Mark and Sandy addressed concerns to FNC Bushfire Management Committee, re: fire impact on population as well as hazard reduction frequency.

The Committee resolved that a working group be formed to meet and make recommendations to be included in 12 monthly review of the bushfire plan and specific protocols for managing bushfire in areas where there are koalas are likely to be found. This issue will be further pursued within the CKPOM process.

## **4. Road Mortality**

Mark and Sally met with Council's Road Safety Officer (Ray Clark), re: road mortality hotspots, especially Clothiers Creek Road. A number of options were canvassed, however as discussed previously (see minutes of 5 October 2010) there are significant difficulties with this site including the presence of Endangered Ecological Communities which would be impacted by physical roadworks. Ray informed us that because Clothiers Creek Road has been identified as a road accident hot spot it may be possible to use speed cameras to keep speeds down in areas where koalas are likely to cross. At present the speed is limited to 70km/hr and while it is unlikely that this could be reduced further, traffic speed data indicate that most road users exceed the existing speed limit. Options include:

1. Write to Traffic Committee (Safety Officer requested that we wait until he follows up on unofficial requests he has made).
2. Request to the Police commander that they provide more presence and the possibility of mobile speed cameras on a user pays basis.
3. Signage during koala dispersal/breeding season
4. Averaging speed cameras – it was indicated that RTA would be unlikely to agree to this.

This issue will be further pursued within the CKPOM process.

## **5. TPO implementation**

Mark talked about some teething issues – complaints and congratulations.

Mark and Sandy have produced a memo for Council planners to explain background/legislative context to the TPO and provide detailed guidance on where a TPO application is, or is not, required.

An in-house brochure has also been produced, which assists in identification of the four Koala food tree species.

## **6. Private Native Forestry (PNF)**

Two PNF approvals have been issued in potential koala habitat areas. The first, was in an area affected by an Environmental Protection zone, the second in an area affected by TPO 2011. Council needs to improve communications with OEH (formerly DECCW) to ensure that landholders are aware that dual consents may be required in some circumstances and to establish appropriate protocols. For example it may be possible to allow PNF approvals in areas affected by the TPO providing the koala provisions in the PNF Code of Practice are triggered and enforced.

Sandy to organise meeting with PNF rep. (Jason Barker).

## **7. Cobaki**

Discussion held regarding the area north of the Tweed River (as mentioned in the TCKHS in relation to possible extinction of that population) and the role of Cobaki Lakes development in that scenario. Mark and Sandy explained that the Concept Plan for Cobaki was approved by the State Government despite substantial

environmental issues raised by Council in its submission. The Concept Plan approval effectively limits the scope of environmental mitigation measures that can be recommended at the Development Application stage. Nonetheless DA staff raised numerous issues in an effort to achieve improved environmental outcomes.

While the Cobaki development does not necessarily preclude the use of surrounding areas for koala recovery, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed by the Consultants including the ability of the area to support a viable population, management of threatening processes, recovery measures in the adjoining areas such as the Gold Coast, connectivity, and the comparative risks faced by the few individuals still persisting north of the Tweed river. Again, this issue will be further pursued within the CKPOM process.

## **8. Koala Connections Project**

Sally gave an update. She wrote to 58 landholders on or near the indicative links identified in the TCKHS – only 3 responses (all positive) as yet. Sally will follow up on others.

Launch/Workshop to be held on 18 June at Pottsville Environment Centre.

Plant propagation has begun at Murwillumbah Nursery and Friends of Koala Nursery.

## **Correspondence In:**

9. Letter and copy of submission made by Tweed Heads Environment Group advocating koala recovery actions in the Cobaki area. As noted above the issue is complex and only partly related to the Cobaki development. Mark to respond after discussion with Dr Philips.
10. Mark distributed to all members a paper on Koalas and climate change. Some areas where best koala population Gunnedah/Pilga scrub etc. are predicted to become less viable (hotter drier leaves less palatable) and thus best areas will be SE Australia where major pressures already exist.

## **14. Endangered Population Nomination**

Jenny Hayes, having to leave early, requested that Agenda item No. 14 be brought forward.

General discussion and agreement on the need to progress this recommendation of the Koala Habitat Study

**Moved:** Cr Holdom

**Seconded:** Lorraine Vass

**RESOLVED** to advance the nomination for an Endangered Population listing for the Tweed Coast koala population.

## **15. Council Notice of Motion - 19 April 2011**

Cr Holdom requested that Agenda item No.15 be brought forward whilst whole Committee present.

The following Notice on Motion was proposed by Cr Milne (seconded by Cr Longland) at the Council meeting of 19 April 2011:

*Proposed that Council address, as a matter of urgency through the Tweed Coast Koala Advisory Group, the provisions in relation to the northern management area referred to in the Koala Habitat Study 2011 to determine what actions, if any, could address the situation for koalas in the north of the Shire as per advice in the Habitat Study.*

Cr Holdom wanted to make clear that her opposition to this motion was on procedural grounds – she considered it inappropriate for Council to interfere in the deliberations of the Koala Advisory Group.

## **11. LG Koala Plan of Management Forum**

OEH (formally DECCW) have organised a forum or North Coast Councils to discuss koala management. Sandy, Mark and Sally to attend and present our process and outcomes to date.

## **12. NSW Environment Trust Environmental Educational Grant**

Sally submitted an Expression of Interest for a grant to undertake community surveys of koalas in the Tweed and Byron Shires and Lismore City Council using the Spot Assessment Technique developed by Steve Phillips and John Callahan. The project would include Train the Trainer courses to empower people to train landholders and community members and website development for participants to upload their data, which could be analysed over time.

## **13. Regional Wild Dog Management Plan**

A draft Regional Wild Dog Management Plan has been prepared by Livestock Health and Pest Authority (LPMA). While the draft Plan acknowledges the need to protect threatened species such as koalas there are no actions identified in the plan to achieve this. Mark to prepare a submission and forward it to the LPMA.

### **Next Meeting:**

The next meeting of the Tweed Coast Koala Advisory Group Committee is 1:30 PM 26 July at the Canvas and Kettle, Murwillumbah.

The meeting closed at 4:25pm.

### **EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S COMMENTS:**

Nil.

### **EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Nil.