

DRAFT Minutes

**DRAFT Minutes of the Tweed Coast Koala Management Committee Meeting held
Tuesday
22 March 2022**

Venue:

Mt Warning Meeting Room, Tweed Shire Council, Murwillumbah

Time:

2.00 pm

Present:

Jenny Hayes, Bill Hoskins, Rhonda James, Lorraine Vass, Scott Benitez Hetherington, Marama Hopkins, Jo Green, Cr Meredith Dennis, Stewart Brawley (part)

Apologies:

Scott opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country.

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Moved: Jenny Hayes

Seconded: Lorraine Vass

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Tweed Coast Management Committee meeting held Tuesday 30 November 2021 be accepted as a true and accurate record of the proceedings of that meeting.

Actions carried over:

Action: Scott to contact Cheyne Flanagan at Port Macquarie Koala Hospital and discuss potential visit.

Action: Marama to prepare a map of 'paper road' road reserves on the Tweed Coast for distribution amongst the committee and further discussion at the next meeting.

Business arising:

BA1. Potential visit to Port Macquarie Koala Hospital (PMKH) to discuss fire response and other koala conservation and management actions

- Further action postponed due to ongoing travel restrictions and lack of capacity to coordinate and implement
- To reconsider in 2022

BA2. Preparation of a map of paper roads on the Tweed Coast

- Council resolution made in consideration of the May meeting minutes requesting review of the *Road Closures and Private Purchase Policy* to identify if amendments required to

ensure that environmental values and potential use of these lands for wildlife habitat is considered.

- No action taken to date due to resource constraints

BA3. Scott to request information regarding opportunities for the committee members to have input into the proposed review of advisory committees

- Scott reported that the review was conducted internally, with Council considering the recommendations at its meeting of 17 February
- Council resolved to continue the Tweed Coast Koala Advisory Committee
- New Terms of Reference are required to be prepared and will be distributed as part of the process to establish a new committee for the current term of council
- Proposed dates for Expression of Interest for membership on the new committee are 28 March – 18 April 2022. Recommendations on membership will be submitted to Council at their meeting of 19th May, with notifications to follow directly

Action: Scott to request clarification as to how the relevant groups associated with current members will be notified and invited to nominate a representative for the new committee.

BA4. Scott to request a report and / or presentation from Currumbin Wildlife Hospital on the operation of the hub, numbers of koalas, vaccinations and release status

- Complete – see agenda item A5

BA5. Scott to request an update from finance unit on the donations made to date and the process for making donations.

- Actioned but response not provided at date of meeting

BA6. Scott to contact Billie Roberts and ask what is the process for recommending parcels for acquisition

- In response to Scott's request, Billie confirmed that:
 - Current priority is for large parcels (>40ha) with high biodiversity values and active koala habitat, connecting or close to NPWS estate.
 - Value for money assessment is critical
 - More specific koala land acquisition criteria may be developed under the new strategy
 - Brendan Taylor is the DPE contact for acquisition recommendations.
- The committee discussed the need for more coastal koala specific criteria due to the generally smaller size of parcels, the higher cost of land and the opportunity for council to take on management where suitable.

BA7. Scott to invite Brendan Taylor to the next Koala Management Committee meeting

- Complete – see agenda item A3

BA8. Marama to access Dan Lunney's presentation on koala rehabilitation and release outcomes and share with the committee.

- Complete

Agenda Items:

A1. Welcome and introductions

- Cr Meredith Dennis was welcomed as the new Councillor representative to the committee
- Stewart Brawley and Brendan Taylor (DPE) were welcomed as guests to the meeting

A2. Business arising

- See notes at items BA1 – BA8 above

A3. Brendan Taylor (DPE)

- Brendan explained his role as Senior Project Officer for the Northern Rivers Koala Partnerships Program with the Department of Planning and Environment
- Brendan outlined the priorities of the regional program working with regional partners including northern rivers councils, Friends of the Koala and other community members, funded through the 4 year, \$193 million investment of the state government.
- Current priorities include:
 - Employment of a koala project officer (to be hosted by Friends of the Koala) to support koala conservation actions across the region
 - Development of a regional koala conservation strategy applying the outcomes of the recent ARC Linkage Grant project and the 2018 regional koala activity survey
 - Habitat restoration (\$390,000 allocated for current financial year)
 - Reducing vehicle strike
 - Improving knowledge (koala genetics, populations and health status)

A4. Habitat restoration

- Jo provided an update on koala habitat restoration projects including:
 - Securing \$115,000 through DPE for current financial year. The funding will extend existing works and provide additional maintenance at eight sites (19 ha total area) at Pottsville, Sleepy Hollow, Duranbah, Upper Duroby, Urliup and Bilambil.
- Recent Bilambil planting held up really well through flooding (15% loss, slightly higher than usual 5%)
- Inspection complete for Cudgen Nature Reserve (Johannsens). Site is looking good with some access track repairs required.
- Rhonda reported that there has been high mortality of the large planting at Duranbah which was flooded by acid sulphate soil affected water.

A5. Tweed Coast Koala Research Hub update

- Scott shared an update on the operations and outcomes of the Tweed Coast Koala Research Hub on behalf of Dr Michael Pyne
- Key points include:
 - 47 koalas have used the facility for a total of 1125 overnight stays
 - All koalas released have been vaccinated with either a single or double shot vaccine
 - The food tree plantation is doing very well and is expected to be in full production by spring/summer

- The facility was not impacted by the recent floods, other than restricted access for 3 days. Koalas had been moved from the facility prior to the event and were moved back in within a week
- The overall vaccination program is also progressing well with 160 koalas vaccinated. Of the 16 koalas captured, vaccinated and released in the Elanora study project, seven have been recaptured for health checks – all have been negative for chlamydia and 3 females had pouch young

A6. Regional koala conservation actions

- Marama provided an update on the regional koala activity survey that is currently underway across Tweed, Byron, Ballina, Lismore, Kyogle and Richmond Valley Councils. The survey is approximately 30% complete with progress impacted by the recent flood event.
- Additional funding has been provided by DPE to increase the number of sites surveyed to enable a standard 5km grid across the entire study area. The DPE science and monitoring team will also provide assistance with analysis of the data.
- The regional partnership model initiated in our region was discussed and acknowledged as a highly beneficial approach to koala conservation and recovery.

General Business:

GB1. Tweed Coast Koala Study 2021

- Marama presented preliminary data from the 2021 survey
- Koala activity on the Tweed Coast appears to remain stable, though further analysis is required to confirm the preliminary assessment
- The results are to be presented to council at a workshop in late April

GB2. Clothiers Creek Rd

- Jenny discussed the efforts of Team Koala members to address the ongoing issue of vehicle strike on Clothiers Creek Rd. This included noting that the issue was discussed at a recent meeting of the Cabarita Ratepayers Association.
- It was noted that there had been ongoing and extensive efforts to address this issue that to date had been unable to fully prevent koala deaths.
- It was agreed that due to the endangered status of the koala at national, state and local population level that additional actions are required.
- It was noted that vehicle strike mitigation is one of the key pillars of the soon to be released NSW Koala Strategy and that funding may be available.
- Given the many constraints associated with fencing, connectivity structures, traffic signage and speed enforcement, creating a low speed traffic environment was proposed. This would involve reducing the speed limit to 50km/hr and installing a series of slow points (as per the successful example at Coronation Avenue, Pottsville).
- It was noted that the Local Traffic Committee are responsible for considering and recommending proposals such as this.
- Cr Dennis offered to seek further information in relation to the process required to propose, discuss and evaluate this option further.

Next Meeting: To be confirmed subject to the committee renewal process resulting from the new term of council

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The meeting closed at 4.00pm

Action summary:

Action: Scott to request clarification as to how the relevant groups represented by the current committee members will be notified and requested to put forward a representative for the new committee.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S COMMENTS:

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS: