

Minutes of the Tweed Coast Koala Management Committee Meeting held Tuesday 11 May 2021

Venue:

Tweed Shire Council Chambers, Murwillumbah

Time:

1.30 pm

Present:

Jenny Hayes, Bill Hoskins, Rhonda James, Lorraine Vass, Scott Benitez Hetherington, Marama Hopkins, Louise Bennett, Cr Katie Milne, Mark Kingston

Apologies:

Jo Green, Tracey Stinson, Catherine Cusack MLC

Scott opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country.

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Moved: Rhonda James

Seconded: Lorraine Vass

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Tweed Coast Management Committee meeting held Tuesday 9 February 2020 be accepted as a true and accurate record of the proceedings of that meeting.

Actions carried over:

Action: Scott to contact Billie Roberts (DPIE) and find out current status, use and potential for application on the Tweed Coast – **Complete**

Action: Scott to contact Cheyne Flanagan at Port Macquarie Koala Hospital and discuss potential visit – **In progress**

Action: Scott to compile analysis of relevant implications of the bushfire enquiry for distribution and/or discussion – **Complete**

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 – **In progress**

Business arising:

BA1. Status and use of koala drinkers installed in the region in 2020

- Scott shared information from Billie Roberts (NSW DPIE) on the koala drinkers project including that 31 drinkers were installed in the northern rivers region (Kyogle, Richmond Valley and Lismore). There was no formal monitoring program and more information may be available through the project manager at Port Macquarie Koala Hospital.

BA2. Potential visit to Port Macquarie Koala Hospital (PMKH) to discuss fire response and other koala conservation and management actions

- Scott confirmed that PMKH are happy to host a visit, with further discussion required to find a suitable time and schedule
- Katie raised consideration of the value in postponing the visit until after the council election in September, so that a councillor of the new term could attend
- It was noted that there may also be different membership of the committee at this time
- Agreed to resolve this matter through out of session email correspondence once further discussions have been held with PMKH.

BA3. Implications of the bushfire enquiry

- Scott summarised the information presented in the previously distributed document
- This included noting that Clause 8 of Koala SEPP 2021 is in force which allows for the removal of koala food trees to meet APZ requirements where a lawfully erected house damaged or destroyed by bushfire has a development application lodged within 5 years of the fire.
- The stated intent of increasing the entitlement to clear along fence lines to 25 m has not been enacted yet. It was clarified that this was not a recommendation of the inquiry, but was presented in conjunction with the inquiry findings.
- Lorraine noted that NSW DPIE have appointed 2 additional positions in the wildlife licensing unit to work on wildfire response requirements.

BA3. Preparation of a map of paper roads on the Tweed Coast

- Committee discussion to confirm the purpose of this action resulted in clarification that the paper roads and vacant crown lands on the Tweed Coast may present an opportunity for improvement of koala habitat extent and connectivity.
- It was noted that there are two key aspects of this matter, being:
 - Seeking to ensure that environmental values are considered when decisions are made regarding any proposed or requested change to tenure or land use of paper roads
 - Identification and analysis of opportunities to undertake habitat improvement works on these lands

Recommendation:

That the *Road Closures and Private Purchase Policy* be reviewed and amended if required to consider environmental values and the potential use of these lands for wildlife habitat. Further, that an analysis of the existing paper roads and other vacant crown land be undertaken to identify opportunities for habitat improvement.

Moved: Katie Milne
Seconded: Rhonda James

Agenda Items:

A1. Tweed Coast Koala Plan of Management approval under NSW Koala SEPP 2021

- Tweed Coast KPOM now approved under NSW Koala SEPP 2021 and applies in all zones.
- Minor administrative changes made prior to approval (amendments to reflect changes in legislation and policy, including adopting the NSW SEPP 2021 tree list and definition of core koala habitat).
- Core koala habitat on the Tweed Coast will now be included on the biodiversity values map.
- Plan published to NSW Planning Portal and council's website.

A2. Council resolution of Thursday 18th March regarding NSW Koala SEPP 2021

- The council resolution in response to the NSW Koala SEPP 2021 was discussed and the current status of actions shared.
- As per the resolution:
 - A letter has been sent to Geoff Provest expressing appreciation for his advocacy for the Tweed Coast KPOM
 - Scott reported that letters have been sent to Geoff Provest, Janelle Saffin and Rob Stokes to request meetings to discuss the range of concerns with the Koala SEPP 2021. *Post meeting note: In following up this item after the meeting, it was identified that as of Wednesday 19th May, the letters are still awaiting approval and distribution.*
 - The other councils mentioned in the resolution have been notified of the actions.
- The committee identified a number of recommendations in relation to the resolution, including the need to follow up the meeting requests as a matter of urgency.
- The committee also noted that the revised NSW Koala Strategy is still awaiting potential release in June and that there has been no detailed consultation with stakeholders to date.

Recommendation:

That the committee notes that DCPA19 needs to be updated in response to the introduction of NSW Koala SEPP 2021 due to the need to address references to the superseded SEPP 44 and the adoption of the Tweed Coast KPOM.

Moved: Mark Kingston
Seconded: Rhonda James

Recommendation:

That the Chair follows up on behalf of the committee seeking to ensure the requested meetings occur as a matter of urgency.

Moved: Lorraine Vass
Seconded: Mark Kingston

Recommendation:

That the Chair write on behalf of the committee to Team Koala thanking the members for their efforts in advocating for better protections for the Tweed Coast koalas

Moved: Katie Milne
Seconded: Lorraine Vass

Action: Scott to send a follow up letter to NSW DPIE requesting a response to previous correspondence regarding funding proposals for a regional koala activity assessment and conservation strategy.

A3. Discussion with Catherine Cusack MLC (1.45pm – 2.15pm, via online meeting)

- Catherine Cusack unable to attend due to other commitments

A4. Habitat restoration status update

Scott shared the following key points on behalf of Jo:

- Significant access improvement works at Cudgen NR nearing completion. Site preparation and revegetation works to commence in May.
- Currently assessing maintenance requirements of existing habitat restoration sites for 21/22
- Site preparation and planting underway at sites at West Pottsville – Cudgerie Reserve and adjacent private property
- Works recommenced after rainy season at Duranbah private property sites
- New sites underway at Bilambil / Terranora
- Rhonda, Marama and Peggy Eby have developed a habitat restoration database which has recently been released to practitioners for user testing. It is proposed that this database will be adopted by state agencies as the standard monitoring approach for funded projects.

A5. KPOM wrap up status update

Louise provided the following points to update status of the KPOM wrap up project

- Reducing koala roadkill:
 - Technical specifications and standard drawings have been produced and published for pavement treatments, fences and signage. This information has been developed for internal use and also to share with other councils to assist with efficiency and standardisation.
 - Standard operating procedure developed for the placement and retrieval of temporary 'koala ahead' road warning signs.
 - Traffic monitoring completed for Clothiers Creek Road and Coronation Avenue. The results identify an ongoing trend from previous monitoring events of a reduced proportion of drivers travelling over the posted limit, but with many drivers still speeding on Clothiers Creek Road.
 - Project management for federally funded infrastructure project to complete fence repairs on Tweed Coast Rd and install a koala zone on Terranora Rd. Both aspects proceeding well with koala zone ready to be installed and environmental assessment for fence repairs about to commence.

- Community engagement and education:
 - Funding support has been secured from NSW DPIE for a regional communications project that will prepare a key messaging program for implementation in the region.

General Business:

GB1. E-zones

- Staff resignations from the planning unit have had further impact on the timing of the initial release of the Stage 1 E-zones.
- Revised scheduling for the finalisation of maps, supporting information and communications plan is to be resolved within the next week.
- Discussed potential to engage proactively with stakeholder and interest groups as part of overall communications and engagement program

GB2. Pottsville koala research hub launch

- The revised date for the launch of the facility has been proposed for 30th June. Invitations to follow as per the previous proposed date in March.

Next Meeting:

Tuesday 10th August 2020: 1.30 – 3.00pm

The meeting closed at 3.25pm

Action summary:

Action: Scott to send a follow up letter to NSW DPIE requesting a response to previous correspondence regarding funding proposals for a regional koala activity assessment and conservation strategy.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S COMMENTS:

BA3. Preparation of a map of paper roads on the Tweed Coast

It should be noted that vehicular access will still need to be maintained along paper roads

A2. Council resolution of Thursday 18th March regarding NSW Koala SEPP 2021

Nil.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

BA3. Preparation of a map of paper roads on the Tweed Coast

That the *Road Closures and Private Purchase Policy* be reviewed and amended if required to consider environmental values and the potential use of these lands for wildlife

habitat. Further, that an analysis of the existing paper roads and other vacant crown land be undertaken to identify opportunities for habitat improvement.

A2. Council resolution of Thursday 18th March regarding NSW Koala SEPP 2021

1. That the committee notes that DCPA19 needs to be updated in response to the introduction of NSW Koala SEPP 2021 due to the need to address references to the superseded SEPP 44 and the adoption of the Tweed Coast KPOM.
2. That the Chair follows up on behalf of the committee seeking to ensure the requested meetings occur as a matter of urgency.
3. That the Chair write on behalf of the committee to Team Koala thanking the members for their efforts in advocating for better protections for the Tweed Coast koalas.