

Minutes

Unconfirmed Minutes of the Tweed Coast Koala Advisory Committee Meeting held Tuesday 18 February 2025

Venue:

Canvas & Kettle Meeting Room, Murwillumbah Civic and Cultural Centre.

Time:

1.30pm

Present:

Cr Nola Firth, Cr Meredith Dennis, Jenny Hayes, Rhonda James, Lorraine Vass, Irene Timmins, Susan Monkley, Cameron Townend, Marama Hopkins, Brooke O'Dea, Scott Benitez Hetherington.

Apologies:

Naomi Searle.

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Moved: Jenny Hayes

Seconded: Lorraine Vass

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Tweed Coast Koala Advisory Committee meeting held on Tuesday 3 September 2024 be accepted as a true and accurate record of the proceedings of that meeting.

Business Arising:

Nil

Agenda Items:

A1. Acknowledgement of Country

Marama completed an Acknowledgement of Country.

A2. Introductions, contributions and expectations

Committee members provided a brief introduction, their contributions and expectations.

A3. Terms of Reference

- Marama provided an overview of the Terms of Reference, noting:
 - The purpose of the Committee is to: *ensure broad community representation and inter-agency involvement in the implementation of the Tweed Coast Koala Plan of Management (KPOM)*.
 - Role and responsibilities of members in providing and sharing information, with specific focus on Tweed Coast (KPOM area).
 - Noting Koala Beach, Kings Forest and Black Rocks have IKPOMs not directly covered by KPOM.
 - Quarterly meetings as per schedule set for 2025.
 - Responsibility of the Chair to set the agenda, not less than 7 days prior to meetings.
 - Council provides secretariat support, including the preparation of minutes.
- Induction to Council's Code of Conduct to be provided at next meeting.

A4. Election of Chair

The Chair of the Committee will be elected by a majority vote of the members of the Committee. Lorraine nominated Rhonda James as Chair of the Tweed Coast Koala Advisory

Committee, Rhonda accepted the nomination, and all members voted in support of the nomination.

Moved: Lorraine Vass

RESOLVED that Rhonda James be appointed as Chair of the Tweed Coast Koala Advisory Committee.

Unanimous

A5. KPOM review – recap & next steps

- Review of the KPOM is the current and ongoing priority.
- Numerous chapters reviewed in 2024 but paused for completion of Tweed Coast koala activity surveys.
- Chapters remaining for committee to review are:
 - 5-Development assessment
 - 6-Strategic Planning
 - 10-Fire Management
 - 12-Community Awareness and Engagement.
- Addressing the new information on koala activity north of the river (Terranora) will be a key change.
- Main intent of review is to update for administrative, operational and best practice changes since 2015.

Action: Marama to re-circulate habitat restoration chapter and review framework to the committee for input prior to next meeting.

A6. Council updates

A6.1 Clothiers Creek Road speed review

- Transport for NSW recently determined a speed limit reduction (100km/h to 80km/h) on 6km of the Bruxner Highway, a koala vehicle strike hotspot. Recent clarification confirmed that the determination was made for driver safety only, not koala vehicle strike risk.
- Brooke noted that fauna on road is a hazard to driver safety, as is a stationary vehicle (that may be stopped while attending to wildlife on the road) and that the current *NSW Speed Zoning Standard* does allow for consideration of wildlife impacts as road safety issues.
- The Northern Rivers Koala Network has prepared a letter to be sent to Transport for NSW requesting that wildlife impacts be considered in speed zone reviews.

Action: Marama to share the Northern Rivers Koala Network letter with the committee for reference when it is ready for distribution.

A6.2 Habitat restoration update

- Habitat restoration work is a key KPOM action funded through Council's budget.
- It includes a project officer position that has been vacant for a few months. New officer to be appointed shortly.
- Current work includes maintenance at 11 planting and habitat restoration sites.
- New work in preparation for another 8 sites including some very high priority locations on private land.
- Sites are selected based on proactive approaches from landholders, priority locations, including meeting habitat restoration framework (new plantings in areas with koala activity, improve habitat in areas of high koala activity, new plantings in linkage areas).
- Jenny noted ongoing interest in community planting events.

A6.3 Tweed Coast koala survey

- Survey work almost complete (78 of 85 sites complete) – worked until rained out in early December, to continue when conditions dry out.
- Encouraging results from planted areas (8 new sites at locations planted over past 10 years, all but one with significant koala activity).
- Remaining sites appear steady since last monitoring event.
- Discussion around potential uses for drone technology – especially site-based issues, fire management and community engagement.

A6.4 Regional communications

- First message from the regionally developed and consistent communications package was released widely in late 2024. Lorraine noted that the initial message was well distributed and very noticeable throughout the region.
- Next message is 'reporting sick or injured koalas'. Messaging will include both Friends of the Koala and Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers contact numbers in Tweed Shire.
- Instagram tiles, header banners etc. are in development for use and distribution by committee members.
- Likely to be followed by Great Koala Count in May.
- Brooke noted that the South East Queensland Regional Fauna Infrastructure Group discussed the reported use of the Boundary Road log bridge by a koala. Issues to note include that monitoring is often not carried out long enough to pick up native animal use, and that the log bridge use was positive and suitable in limited applications.

Action: Marama to share regional communications items when available.

Action: Committee members to share across all possible channels.

General Business:

GB1. Koala euthanasia

- Irene sent a query to Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital senior vet regarding ovarian cysts and euthanasia.
- Practice has changed and koalas are now only euthanised when welfare concerns exist.
- Currumbin Wildlife Hospital has been desexing and releasing koalas for the broader range of social benefits where suitable.
- Chronic bladder conditions, pain and other health considerations associated with chlamydia may still result in euthanasia.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Tweed Coast Koala Advisory Committee will be held on Tuesday 20 May 2025 at 1.30pm.

The meeting closed at 3.20pm

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S COMMENTS:

Nil.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

Nil.