

# Draft – Not Government Policy

## Queensland Koala Technical Advisory Group

### Terms of Reference

#### Background

The Queensland Government has developed and released new koala habitat mapping for South East Queensland to support implementation of the South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2020-25 (the Strategy) and amended koala conservation protections within the planning framework.

The Koala Conservation Plan Map is provided for by the Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2017 (the Plan). The Plan establishes maps for:

- Koala priority areas—large, connected areas that will focus habitat protection, habitat restoration and threat mitigation to areas that have the highest likelihood of safeguarding koala populations in South East Queensland.
- Koala habitat areas—areas that are subject to protections under the new koala conservation protections in South East Queensland.
- Koala districts map—establishes what requirements of the Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2017 apply to each area of Queensland.

The new koala habitat mapping uses regional ecosystem and high-value regrowth mapping, provided by the Queensland Herbarium and identifies the best quality koala habitat, based on modelling of biophysical measures, suitable vegetation (for food and shelter) and koala occurrence records. The new mapping is designed to focus the government's conservation efforts on areas that have the greatest chance of supporting koala populations. The methodology was endorsed by the Koala Expert Panel and peer-reviewed by CSIRO.

The Queensland Koala Technical Advisory Group (KTAG) has been established to provide independent science based and technical advice on the identification and mapping of koala habitat to support the statutory mapping of koala habitat areas in South East Queensland (SEQ). KTAG will also consider other matters relevant to the conservation of koalas and implementation of the Strategy.

KTAG will provide advice to support the community pathway process being implemented by the Queensland Government to allow local councils and community members to input into the annual update to the koala habitat map. This process has been informed by the existing process which allows landholders to make an application to the department to make, amend or revoke koala habitat mapping on their own properties. This process has shown that, while the koala habitat mapping is robust and highly accurate, detailed local information can allow for refinements.

#### Role of the KTAG

The role of KTAG is to provide the Director-General of the Department of Environment and Science (the department) with independent and science based technical advice on mapping of koala habitat areas under the Plan and the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 2006 (the Regulation).

The KTAG is appointed to provide independent science-based technical advice in relation to:

- If an area proposed has the attributes to be included in the annual update of koala habitat areas according to the current methodology used by the department to map koala habitat areas under Section 7B of the Plan.
- Other science and technical matters relevant to the conservation of koalas and implementation of the SEQ Koala Conservation Strategy.



Other matters on which the KTAG may provide advice to the Director-General include:

- Revision and improvement of modelling and mapping methodologies which support the mapping of koala habitat areas.
- Review of Regional Ecosystems that are included as koala habitat in current models.
- Advances in modelling and mapping methodologies relevant to the producing the koala habitat area map.
- Mapping and management of threats to koala conservation.
- Science and technical matters related to koala conservation referred to the KTAG by the Koala Advisory Council.

In providing advice to the Director-General, the KTAG will review information provided in community submissions that is reasonably available in relation to the combination of biophysical measures and suitability of vegetation in the areas under consideration. This includes, but is not limited to, information collected from site inspections, spatial information on regional ecosystems, high value regrowth, koala occurrence records and local and expert advice from relevant third parties.

It is not the role of KTAG to undertake a critical review or redesign of the existing methodology used by the department to map koala habitat areas but rather to provide considered advice with regards to continuous improvement based on new information and advances in knowledge and technology.

## **Membership**

Membership of the KTAG is on an honorary basis. The Queensland Government appreciates the time commitments made by members, both non-government and Queensland Public Service officers.

KTAG membership is a specialised and technical role. Retaining membership for a full two-year term, where possible, is desirable.

The KTAG will consist of between six to eight members appointed by the Director-General. Up to two of whom may be Queensland Public Service officers. The KTAG will also include membership from universities and/or specialists in conservation management.

The Director-General may appoint a Queensland Public Service Officer or a private citizen to be the Chairperson.

Members are appointed in their own right and not as representatives of any particular organisation. Hence, they are expected to act impartially in assessing submissions and providing advice. At their own discretion, members may function as information providers on relevant issues where they have access to information relevant to the considerations of the KTAG. It is the responsibility of members to identify conflicts of interest between providing information and respecting the confidentiality of some of the information provided to the KTAG, and to seek and follow direction regarding disclosure of the information. This will be done during KTAG meetings or through the Chair.

All members of the KTAG are to have specialist knowledge and experience in the sciences of the zoology, botany, conservation, and/or ecology of native wildlife (i.e. flora and fauna) and be familiar with the modelling and mapping methodologies which currently support the mapping of Koala Habitat Areas in South East Queensland.

From time-to-time, the KTAG may source additional expertise to provide supplementary knowledge required for particular matters which are outside the expertise of the existing KTAG membership.

For the purposes of giving advice to the Director-General under this section, the KTAG may consult with the broader scientific community as it considers appropriate.

A departmental representative with relevant technical expertise and knowledge relevant to the modelling and mapping of koala habitat areas will attend all KTAG meetings as an observer to provide technical support and advice to KTAG. They will not vote on matters under consideration by the KTAG.

Observers may attend meetings with the prior approval of the Chair. Other guests and specialist advisers may also be invited to attend and provide advice to the KTAG.

## **Appointments to the KTAG**

The Chair and all KTAG members are appointed by the Director-General.

Expressions of interest for new KTAG members will be publicly advertised. A mandatory search of the Queensland Register of Nominees will also be conducted.

Nominations will be encouraged from individuals who have the capacity to provide multiple levels of advice. Similarly, individuals nominating for the KTAG will be encouraged to seek endorsement from as many relevant parties as possible.

KTAG member selection will be mindful of the KTAG's corporate memory and may give additional consideration to ensuring some continuity of membership between the outgoing and incoming members. Consideration will also be given to gender balance, the inclusion of youth and other equity considerations within the KTAG.

Nominations will be reviewed by the department, with a recommendation submitted to the Koala Advisory Council for endorsement prior to submission to the Director-General for approval.

Changes to the Terms of Reference must be endorsed by the Director-General.

## **Term of appointment**

Members, including the Chair, will be appointed for a two-year term and are eligible for re-appointment for a term not exceeding five years, as specified in the instrument of re-appointment.

Members, including the Chair, may resign at any time they feel unable to offer informed advice regarding their nominated sector of representation. Members will be eligible for reappointment in another term. A shorter term of appointment can be made to replace a member, or to supplement KTAG knowledge and skills to meet emerging requirements.

Appointments to the Committee will ideally balance the introduction of new members with retention of the Committee's corporate memory.

## **Meeting attendance and procedures**

Although no minimum time commitments are set, it is expected that members will attach a priority to attending and participating in all meetings the Chair invites them to based on the need for advice in the areas of their expertise. The expectation is that members will attend at least 75% of meetings annually except in unusual circumstances. If a member is unable to meet attendance requirements, they will be asked to review their membership of the KTAG.

It is also expected that members will allocate appropriate preparation time for the reading of agenda papers and responding to issues where the KTAG's advice is sought.

The KTAG will operate according to the following procedures:

At any meeting of the KTAG, four members (including the chair or authorised delegate) forms a quorum.

- If a member is unable to attend a meeting, proxies will not be permitted.
- KTAG meetings will occur at least twice annually and will be called by the Chair as required to enable nominations accumulated since the previous meeting to be assessed and/or reviewed within timeframes set out by the Plan.

- Decisions arising at a meeting will be determined by a majority vote of KTAG members present and voting, or where the expertise of absent members is required, the Chair may contact relevant persons and accept their vote by email.
- The KTAG must keep full and accurate minutes of the proceedings at each of its meetings.

### **Remuneration of KTAG members**

As the membership of the KTAG is on an honorary basis, the Queensland Government is appreciative of the time commitments made by members. All out of pocket travel expenses incurred by KTAG members to attend meetings is reimbursed.

DES shall process KTAG reimbursements, where possible, within four weeks of when the expense incurred. Invited guests, observers and specialist advisers attend at their own cost unless otherwise approved by the Director, Southern Wildlife and Koala Operations, Department of Environment and Science.

Expenses and allowances for Queensland Public Service officers will accord with standard Queensland Public Directives and relevant departmental operational policy and will be organised by the individual KTAG member using their substantive departmental budget.

### **Operation of the KTAG**

The KTAG shall meet at least a minimum of twice per year and up to four times each year. An indicative, annual schedule of meetings will be made available at the first meeting of the KTAG with specific dates and times decided in consultation with the Chair and members of the KTAG in advance of each meeting.

The schedule of meetings will be developed in consideration of statutory timeframes and lead times in relation to the annual update of the koala habitat area map.

- If the Chair is absent, the KTAG will elect a temporary Chair.
- The procedure for the conduct of business will be by consensus and recommendation.
- Where consensus is not possible, the KTAG will indicate in its meeting report the number of members supporting a particular view and the alternate views of members not supporting a recommendation.

Only the Chair has the authority to report to the Director-General or the department on the outcomes of KTAG meetings and deliberations.

### **Roles of Chair, Members and Secretariat**

#### **Chairperson (Chair)**

The responsibilities of the Chair include:

- Conduct meetings according to standard meeting procedure and the terms of reference.
- Facilitate discussion on the agenda items in a timely manner, seeking consensus on issues and developing advice to provide to the Director-General.
- Facilitate participation of all KTAG members in the meeting.
- Present KTAG advice/recommendations, including unanimous, majority and/or divergent views on discussion topics.
- Liaise with the Directors of the Department of Environment and Science (DES) Queensland Herbarium and Southern Wildlife and Koala Operations, and other parties as required.
- Maintain a comprehensive database of all KTAG actions and advice provided.
- Provide a report to the department on the results of all KTAG deliberations that advise action under the Plan.

## **Members**

The responsibilities of members include:

- Providing scientific and technical expertise, experience and advice.
- Supporting consistency with the current scientific views, the koala habitat area Mapping Methodology, the Act and the Regulation, through written and oral input. Members may also be required to research and prepare data and advice to support comprehensive and current species assessments.
- Debating and formulating views on issues brought before the KTAG and providing appropriate advice. Consulting with other experts, industry and stakeholders and disseminating information (subject to any overriding confidentiality and media provisions under these terms of reference and the Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct).
- Participating in agreed working groups.
- Allocating preparation time for reading of agenda papers etc.

## **Secretariat**

The Secretariat, provided by the Department of Environment and Science (DES), will provide administrative support including:

- Liaise between DES, the Koala Advisory Council and the KTAG.
- Assist in documenting KTAG processes and outputs including minutes, meeting reports and correspondence, and otherwise assist the Chair commensurate with the role and other duties.
- Oversee the KTAG mailbox on behalf of the KTAG, collate and respond to submissions and distribute relevant information as required. Undertake KTAG related tasks to support the work of the KTAG and effect revision of the koala habitat area map.
- Undertake communication and data exchange between the KTAG and the DES Director and/or Manager, Southern Wildlife and Koala Operations and the DES Director Queensland Herbarium.
- Assist with communication and data exchange between the KTAG and other jurisdictions in consultation with the Koala Advisory Council.

## **Termination of KTAG membership**

Termination of membership of the KTAG will be by the Director-General. If by reason of a change of occupation, residence or other circumstances, a member, in the opinion of the Chair and/or the Director-General, ceases to be a person suitable to represent the interests that were the basis for his or her appointment their membership can be terminated.

If a member notifies the Director-General in writing of their desire to resign, this shall become effective upon receipt of the resignation by the Director-General.

## **Operation of KTAG meetings**

The KTAG may hold meetings by means of any technology permitting communication between members.

The KTAG may consider matters and provide advice out-of-session.

Out-of-session papers will be reserved for (i) urgent issues or (ii) issues approved for out-of-session consideration through the agreement of a majority of KTAG members.

Matters decided out-of-session by the KTAG must be noted by the KTAG at the next formal meeting and recorded in the minutes of that meeting.

Special meetings of the KTAG outside of those in the agreed annual schedule of meetings may be convened by any four members. Ideally this will be, but is not restricted to, the Chair and three other KTAG members.

## **Disclosing Conflicts of Interest**

Conflicts of interest must be disclosed and dealt with by the KTAG in a transparent way. A conflict of interest arises in relation to a person's duties as a member of the KTAG, if for example:

- the member has interests which could improperly influence the performance of his/her responsibilities as an KTAG member; and/or
- there is the potential for a member to personally benefit from access to non-public information, or the results of non-public discussions or decision-making processes.

A KTAG member must declare any actual or potential conflicts as soon as possible after the relevant facts come to the member's knowledge. Where a declaration is made, the KTAG must:

- Refuse the member the right to participate in discussions when the matter is being considered.
- Require the member to withdraw from a meeting for the period of discussion and resolution of that business.
- Record the declared conflict in the minutes of the KTAG meeting.

### **Attachment 1**

#### **Membership of the Koala Technical Advisory Group**

- To be confirmed