

## MidCoast Koala Reference Group

The MidCoast Koala Reference Group was established by resolution of MidCoast Council (Council) on 14 December 2022 (resolution 531/2022).

### Background

The MidCoast Koala Reference Group has been formed to support the implementation of the MidCoast Regional Partnership (MRP) Project being funded by the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) under the NSW Koala Strategy.

The NSW Koala Strategy has provided funding to MidCoast Council for the MRP Project which involves three key actions:

- recruitment of a Koala Project Officer over a 4-year term to assist Council in delivering local koala conservation actions;
- preparation of mapping to identify strategically important koala habitat areas in the MidCoast; and
- using the koala habitat mapping to inform the possible development of a draft Koala Plan of Management (KPoM) with the aim of maintaining and enhancing priority koala habitat areas in the MidCoast LGA.

The Reference Group will provide input to the development of the Koala Plan of Management that will highlight key projects in priority koala habitat areas of the MidCoast. It is intended that this strategic document will help to develop local actions under the NSW Koala Strategy.

### Purpose

The MidCoast Koala Reference Groups' objective is to encourage the proper conservation and management of areas of natural vegetation that provide habitat for koalas, to ensure a permanent free-living population over their present range and to reverse the current trend of koala population decline.

The purpose of the Reference Group is to support the successful delivery of a draft Koala Plan of Management (KPoM). In doing so, the Reference Group will:

- provide input into the strategic direction of the MRP Project including the identification of priority koala planning areas and the development of the draft KPoM;
- work with the Environment and Heritage Group and the DPE, particularly to ensuring the adequacy of studies and survey for the draft KPoM;
- provide input into the development of a Stakeholder Engagement Plan and offer guidance on communicating the project to landholders and the wider community.

It is important to note that the Reference Group is not a decision-making body but a forum for discussion and advice to help successfully deliver a draft KPoM.



## Roles & responsibilities

### Membership

The membership of the Reference Group shall consist of:

- two (2) Councillors
- two (2) representatives from the Biodiversity & Conservation Division of the NSW Department of Planning & Environment
- one (1) representative from each of the following State government agencies who manage public land in the MidCoast LGA:
  - National Parks & Wildlife Service
  - NSW Forestry Corporation
  - Crown Lands
- one (1) representative from Hunter Local Land Services
- eight (8) community representatives from a diverse range of interests including but not limited to:
  - representative from NSW Farmers
  - Traditional owner representative
  - representative from a koala carer group
  - representative from a community environment group
  - rural landholder representative
  - general community representative
  - representative from the planning or development industry
  - representative from MidCoast 2 Tops Landcare

A member's appointment may be ended on the basis of one of the following:

- resignation of a member
- regular non-attendance at meetings (note: members shall be considered to have vacated their position if they have been absent from three meetings without an apology)
- failure to respect the protocols and confidentiality requirements (set out below)

### *Additional Membership*

Up to two (2) additional people may be appointed to the group if it is considered that additional skills and experience would benefit a specific project or add value to the general performance of the Reference Group.

From time to time, other people who have a clearly defined interest in topics being discussed by the Group may be invited to the meetings to contribute to discussions.

### *Criteria for industry and community membership*

- possess local knowledge and understanding of issues affecting the MidCoast koala population
- participate in community networks or possess connections in the area of biodiversity management and protection



- a demonstrated interest in addressing the threats to koalas that will be addressed in a KPoM
- current involvement in one of the industries or interest groups nominated in these Terms of Reference
- an ability to look beyond personal interests and focus on the broader benefits for koalas
- an ability and willingness to encourage participation from, and provide feedback to the industry or community regarding the development of a draft KPoM
- an ability to constructively participate in an advisory capacity
- willingness and ability to actively participate in meetings for the required duration in a fair, constructive and unbiased manner that meet the objectives of the Reference Group.

## **Chairperson**

The nominated Councillor shall chair the Reference Group. If the nominated Councillor is not available the replacement Chair shall be the other Councillor appointed to the group, or if unavailable, the staff representative as required.

## **Committee members**

Positions for representatives from key public authorities will be filled on nomination by the respective organisations.

The community members will be appointed by Council following a publicly advertised process. Members shall be expected to bring diverse knowledge, skills, experience and address the following criteria:

- Aged 18 years or over, or, if aged under 18 years old, have parent/guardian's permission to participate;
- Currently residing, studying, working or volunteering within the MidCoast Council local government area;
- Demonstrate a commitment to advancing community inclusion and wellbeing across the MidCoast local government area;
- Demonstrate a willingness and ability to actively participate in reference group activities for the required duration in a fair, constructive and unbiased manner for the benefit of the MidCoast community.

A nomination form must be completed by interested representatives from the community or industry groups, and all nominations will be assessed against their stated knowledge, experience, skills and responses to the criteria relevant to the Reference Group.

Members may determine to work in subgroups (Working Groups) for specific projects. In this case Working Group chairs shall be appointed by the members.

## **Council support**

To enable the Reference Group to operate effectively Council staff shall provide:

- any material and draft documents to undertake tasks / projects and an opportunity for discussion at meetings (as agenda items)
- regular updates relevant to the Reference Group's purpose
- expert advice from the different areas of Council, as required

- open and transparent communications on coastal management
- secretariat services and venues for meetings
- appropriate insurance cover for Committee members when they are undertaking tasks as agreed by the Committee and Council staff

## **Dissolution**

The Reference Group will cease at the completion of the MidCoast Regional Partnership Project.

Council may determine to dissolve the Reference Group where the Group:

- has achieved its purpose for establishment
- has become unproductive
- can no longer maintain membership in line with its terms of reference
- activities no longer service the priorities and/or core business of Council
- legislation has changed the roles and responsibilities of Council.

## **Commitments**

### **Confidentiality**

From time to time, members may be required to review and comment on draft documentation that has not been formally considered by the Council's decision-making body.

In these circumstances, it is crucial members understand the status of any documentation and the importance of maintaining confidentiality if they wish to have preliminary input. Discussion may take place on matters subject to State or Federal Government protocols that need to be adhered to.

Members may also be privy to financial, legal or personal landowner information, which cannot be disclosed outside of the committee.

Each member is required to agree to the confidentiality requirements of membership.

### **Meetings**

The Reference Group shall meet a minimum quarterly, at a time and location agreed by the members, for a maximum of 2 hours, unless agreed by the group.

A quorum for attendance shall be a minimum of half of the membership plus one. A Council staff member should be present for each meeting.

The following meeting protocols shall apply:

- members shall respect the role of the Chair in the conduct of the meetings
- members shall respect the right of every members to speak and put forward their views
- members shall respect the Chair's decisions (if a consensus is not able to be reached) in relation to agenda items and timeframes
- meetings are generally run through consensus, however, should the need arise for a vote, only the Councillors and community members shall participate (i.e. Council staff are not to participate in any voting), having one vote each. Where there is an opposing view the members can choose to have their name recorded in the minutes

- stating their position.
- agenda and supporting documentation will be distributed electronically (by email) at least five working days prior to the meeting date
  - minutes, providing an overview of discussions and actions to be progressed, shall be taken at each meeting and made available to members within two weeks of the meeting. Minutes will be maintained electronically and distributed to members via email. Minutes shall be made publicly available on Council's website; however, it is recognised that confidential items are not to be made public.

Where possible, members shall be notified in advance of any confidential items.

## Limitations

While the Reference Group may provide guidance to Council on key issues such as corporate policy and objectives, marketing strategy, resource allocation, and decisions, the Reference Group may not:

- on Council's behalf agree to any acquisitions of land
- incur expenditure by Council
- make any payment to members of the Reference Group
- accept public liability risk from another organisation
- make grant applications dependent on or committing Council to expenditure, either initial or ongoing
- bind Council
- become involved in the day to day operations of Council activities

## Code of conduct & Conflict of interest

All members are required to comply with Council's Code of Conduct (copy attached to this document) and participate in Code of Conduct training and an induction provided by Council.

In accordance with the Code and training, a member of the Reference Group who has a financial, commercial or economic interest in any matter before the group (conflict of interest) must disclose the nature of the interest to the meeting and must leave the meeting while the matter is being considered.

## Contact with the media

Media enquiries relating to the work or operation of the committee are to be referred to and managed by Council's Communications team. Media statements cannot be made by members of the committee.

Where a member considers that there needs to be a media comment in relation to any items discussed by the committee, the member must bring the matter to the attention of the Council staff representative.

## Review

An annual summary report which captures the actions of the group is to be provided each year for inclusion in Council's Annual Report. Additional reports to Council may also be necessary when key milestones are reached or to progress elements of a specific project or specific recommendations to Council.



The membership and these Terms of Reference are to be reviewed at the end of the Council term, within three months of the Council election.

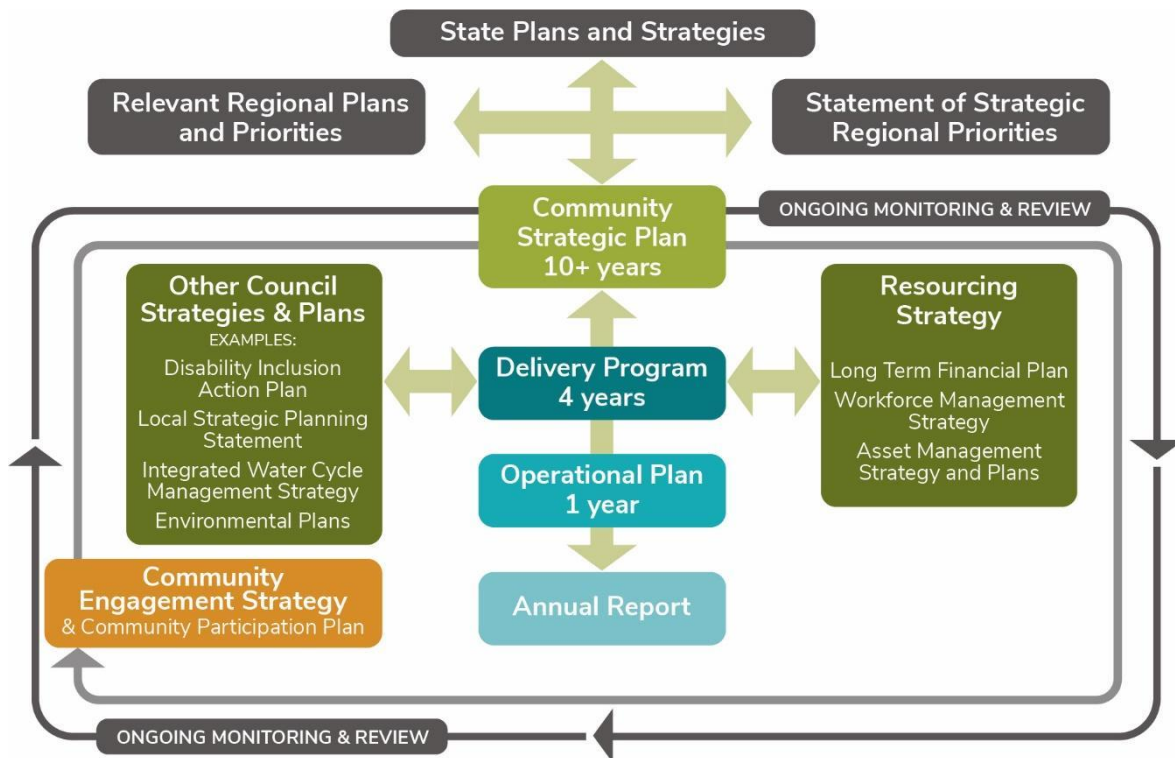
## Governance

### Integrated planning & reporting requirements of Local Government

The scope of work for the MidCoast Koala Reference Group is focused on contributing to actions that assist the delivery of the NSW Koala Strategy within the MidCoast LGA.

This aligns with the Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework (shown below and outlined in the Local Government Act). All of the activities of the group need to align with the outcomes in the Community Strategic Plan and any subsequent endorsed Council strategies.

### Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework



### Attachments - [Policies Library - MidCoast Council \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/policies-library)

- Code of Conduct
- Gifts and Benefits Policy