

## TERMS OF REFERENCE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATIONS OF THE BIODIVERSITY AND KOALA HABITAT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

### **Background to establishment**

Council at its Ordinary Meeting held on December 9 2020 repealed its Southside Structure Plan and Protection of Biodiversity Values (whole of Council Area) Temporary Local Planning Instruments (TLPs).

The TLPs when implemented resulted in unintended outcomes that were not expected including impacts on smaller urban lots, conflict between the areas needed for heavy lifting for housing development and the restrictions imposed on development by the TLPs, requirements for dwelling houses in some instances to be impact assessable and inability to clear dead or damaged trees within the Southside Precinct. These are just a summary of the examples of unintended outcomes.

Although the removal of the TLPI was perceived as placing future development as a higher priority than the environment, this is not the case.

Council has a clear and strong position to manage the balance of biodiversity and development in a manner that is driven by community partnership not regulation. This is to ensure Council achieves an outcome that is a balance between environmental protection and future development that is in the best interest for the community and the region. This Council community driven position, will result in Council promoting this vision to developers, builders, business, community and State Government agencies to name a few.

Council will not be stopping short at biodiversity. The Council has already agreed to develop a climate change policy and broaden its considerations of environmental sustainable design, water conservation, erosion management and habitat development. It has already developed a draft Coastal Hazard Adaption Strategy that has been put out to public consultation which closed end of November 2020.

### **Function of the Reference Group**

The function of the group is to be part of Council's engagement strategy in relation to matters of biodiversity and the processes of Council that interact with biodiversity. The promotion of preservation and rehabilitation of all habitat types, but in particular Koala habitat, is front of mind to the development of the strategy.

The group will provide information and inputs into the whole of Council direction in relation to development, biodiversity and koala management. Council however may also choose to undertake broad community engagement on issues to utilise advice from this group in the development of engagement instruments, processes and consideration of feedback including officer recommendations.

The reference group nor its members have any decision making powers and the role is that of raising issues, providing advice and feedback on Council policy and direction and considering feedback of broader engagement.

### **Objectives**

- Encourage engagement on issues of biodiversity across the Gympie Council area;
- Seek out issues, advice and feedback on matters relating to the development of a Biodiversity and Koala Habitat Development Strategy;
- Provide focus on the development of biodiversity habitat in areas that are located where development cannot occur because of other current constraints including land below the Q100 flood level, steep slopes and Council and State owned land that has not been earmarked for future development. This includes buffer zones around sewerage treatment plants and landfill sites;
- Encourage sustainable development in respect to economic, social and environmental outcomes;
- Provide direction to the new Planning Scheme considerations on matters of biodiversity;
- Support community partnerships in that support sustainability and biodiversity outcomes.

### **Membership**

The reference group will include a representative of the following stakeholders:

- Private planners
- Developers
- Builders
- Land care volunteers
- Koala groups
- Business
- Community
- Farmers and Graziers
- Fauna and Flora specialist
- Gympie Regional Council

Council reserves the right to add additional members where other stakeholder types have been identified. Council also reserves the right to rotate members of the group to ensure that it has ongoing balanced feedback from each identified sector.

Membership will be for a time period determined by the Chief Executive Officer.

### **Appointment of Members**

The Chief Executive Officer of the Council will determine the membership. Council officers will approach each sector and seek expressions of interest to be a representative of each sector via a selection criteria process. Numbers will be limited to one member per sector.

Council will encourage members to engage with other in their sector as part of the engagement process.

Council will also publically call for expressions of interest via the Council website and Facebook page.

### **Authority**

The authority of the members of the reference group is limited to the contribution in relation to raising issues, providing advice and feedback on Council policy and direction and considering feedback of broader engagement. The contribution will be about the development of a Biodiversity and Koala Habitat Development Strategy and related matters.

### **Chair**

Meetings of the reference group will be chaired by a Council officer.

### **Quorum**

Due to the non-decision making role of the reference group no quorum has been set.

### **Meeting Attendance**

If members are unable to attend meetings as invited for 2 consecutive meetings, then Council may appoint a replacement member for that sector. Council would appreciate 30 days' notice if a member feels they need to resign from the group.

Proxy members are not accepted.

### **Conflict of Interest**

A member must declare any potential conflict of interest at the commencement or during the course of the meeting. Due to the non-decision making role of the reference group members are not required to absent themselves from discussion where they have identified a conflict of interest. Other members of the groups should consider the conflict when providing responses to discussion.

### **Advisors**

Council reserves the right to invite advisors such as government agency representatives and subject matter specialists to attend the reference group meetings.

### **Council May Establish Working Groups**

Notwithstanding the establishment of the reference group Council reserves the right to establish working groups to undertake roles in relation to matters that might be discussed or actioned from the reference group engagement.

### **Meetings of Reference Group**

Council will set the invitation of the reference group to suit the timelines of the required responses.

Council may also seek feedback from members on matters through circulated emails.

### **Reporting**

Activities and outcomes of the reference group will be reported to the Chief Executive Officer.

Council may provide community updates on a regular basis on the activities and outcome of the reference group.

### **Spokesperson**

The spokesperson for the reference group will be the nominated officer of the Council who presides over the meetings and/or the Chief Executive Officer.

### **Portfolio Councillors**

The Planning Portfolio Councillors will be invited to attend the meetings of the reference group as observers as a matter of courtesy.

### **Approved:**

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**Shane Gray Chief Executive Officer**

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