

Hon Murray Watt MP
Minister for the Environment and Water
Via email: minister.watt@dcceew.gov.au

5 June 2026

Dear Minister,

We write to express our serious concern regarding the ongoing failure to maintain an effective and meaningful Community Advisory Committee (CAC) consultation process under the National Recovery Plan for the Koala. The current arrangements are not providing the level of consultation, transparency or community engagement envisaged when the CAC was established and are undermining effective implementation of the Recovery Plan.

We were appointed to the CAC in March 2023 to provide community-based advice on implementation of the [*Recovery Plan for the Koala \(combined populations of Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory\)*](#). At the outset, the CAC was intended to play an active role in recovery plan implementation, including providing advice, identifying opportunities for community action, and contributing to annual reporting.

Community organisations, local government representatives and individuals represented on the CAC are actively involved in koala conservation, habitat restoration, wildlife rescue, advocacy, research and community education across the recovery plan jurisdictions. The failure to effectively engage this expertise represents a missed opportunity to strengthen recovery outcomes and build community confidence in implementation of the Recovery Plan.

Breakdown in consultation and coordination

Since the CAC was established:

- only three meetings have been held,
- there has been no formal meeting since November 2024,
- communication has been infrequent and of limited relevance to recovery plan implementation, and
- there have been multiple changes in the coordinator role, with no clear continuity of engagement.

We understand a new coordinator has been in place for several months, yet CAC members have received no direct communication or re-engagement.

This poor consultation represents a significant failure of governance, accountability and stakeholder engagement. Without regular consultation, transparent reporting and genuine opportunities for input, the CAC risks becoming a symbolic mechanism through which stakeholder engagement can be claimed without stakeholders having any meaningful capacity to influence implementation.



Lack of transparency and meaningful engagement

Information provided to the CAC on recovery plan implementation has been limited to high-level summaries, with vague descriptors such as “some progress” or “limited progress”, without detail on actions undertaken or outcomes achieved.

In addition, CAC members are no longer being informed of relevant opportunities, such as funding programs, research updates, relevant amendments to the EPBC Act and collaborative opportunities, which undermines our ability to contribute meaningfully.

Given that the Recovery Plan is a statutory recovery instrument under the EPBC Act, there should be a clear and transparent process for reporting on implementation and outcomes. The information provided to CAC members to date has not enabled meaningful assessment of progress against recovery objectives.

Our requests

At a time when koala populations continue to face significant threats from habitat loss, fragmentation, vehicle strike, disease, predation and climate-related impacts, effective implementation of the Recovery Plan has never been more important.

To restore integrity to both the consultation process and the effective delivery of the Koala Recovery Plan, urgent intervention is required. We request that you direct the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (**DCCEEW**), and specifically the Koala Recovery Team Coordinator, to:

- Immediately establish a functioning and accountable consultation process, including scheduled CAC meetings at least twice annually;
- Provide transparent, detailed reporting on Recovery Plan implementation, including clearly defined actions, measurable outcomes, and timelines;
- Ensure that the Koala Recovery Team Board priorities and views are provided to CAC members,
- Publicly report, on an annual basis, the total area of koala habitat approved for clearing under the EPBC referral process; and
- Ensure CAC members are actively engaged in, and informed of, all relevant funding, research, consultation processes and collaboration opportunities.

Given the urgency of continued koala habitat loss and population decline, we request a written response outlining the actions that will be taken to restore an effective CAC process and improve transparency regarding implementation of the Recovery Plan.

CAC members remain committed to supporting the recovery of koala populations and contributing constructively to implementation of the Recovery Plan. However, meaningful participation requires a consultation process that is active, transparent, accountable and capable of incorporating community expertise into decision-making.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Coral Rowston

On behalf of Community Advisory Committee members