

18 August, 2011

Mr. Stephen Palethorpe
Committee Secretary
The Senate
Environment and Communications References Committee
PO Box 6100, Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia



Dear Stephen,

Since its inception in 2010, the Koala Research Network (KRN) has become a widely recognized and highly respected consortium of koala researchers from various Universities and Research Institutions across Australia.

The KRN has been extremely active:

- In May in Brisbane, a delegation of KRN experts addressed the Senate Inquiry into the Health and Status of the Koala, providing the Senate Committee with the latest information regarding the threats to koalas from disease, climate change and urbanization and their significant population declines in many regions. The KRN has also made a submission to Canberra regarding the national listing of the koala.
- Chaired by Professor Peter Timms, the KRN held a focussed workshop in June to discuss all aspects of infectious diseases in the koala, including a summary of what is already known, areas where research is currently on-going and listing of research priorities for the future.
- The KRN has recently submitted a Working Group Funding Proposal to the Australian Centre for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis (ACEAS) to conduct Workshops aimed at synthesising the size and trends by region of Australia's koala populations. This is a key area of information that is lacking at a national level. Expert elicitation software tools will be utilised to achieve this goal. The ACEAS funding has been provisionally awarded and the first Workshop will be held later this year.

The KRN is now acting as vital source of information and communication on koala research and management issues for government and other stakeholders. However, currently the group is operating on a voluntary basis, with no sources of external funding and there is now a pressing need for a full-time Research Liaison Officer. The future functioning of the KRN depends on securing financial support for this role until longer term funding can be secured.

The KRN steering committee has identified one of its committee members, Christine Adams-Hosking, as the ideal person for this position. The committee envisages that Christine would serve as a valuable link between the Commonwealth Government and the national network of koala researchers, gathering and disseminating information and ensuring an ongoing flow of communication between researchers, policy makers and the community. This would be achieved by:

- Providing koala-related research information to the Senate Committee and relevant Departments as required.
- Organising and facilitating meetings and koala research workshops, including the previously mentioned ACEAS Workshops and also a National Koala Conference of koala researchers in mid-2012.
- Organising KRN committee meetings.
- Maintaining the KRN website and responding to communications from a range of sources.
- Providing an initial point of contact for the more than 60 nation-wide members of the KRN.

As the spokesperson for the KRN, I would be most grateful for the opportunity to discuss the appointment of the Research Liaison Officer and the potential for Commonwealth funding for this position. We envisage that we would require \$120,000 for one year, to provide a salary and associated travel costs to meetings, workshops etc. I would provide an 'in kind' contribution of 10% (\$15,500.00).

The conservation of koala populations is a national priority and there is continuing uncertainty regarding the need for the national protection of the koala, to ensure its survival across its natural range. This appointment would ensure that the Koala Research Network can continue to grow and provide an important service to the Commonwealth and State governments and to the broader community.

I would be most grateful if you could forward this request to the Senate Committee for its consideration and look forward to discussing this matter further, at Committee's earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

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