

**Total
Environment
Centre**
for the future

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24th January 2019

Dear

SYDNEY'S KOALAS – PUBLIC STATEMENT

The Greater Macarthur – Campbelltown area in south-western Sydney contains the only population of koalas listed in NSW by McAlpine et. al. (2015) to be growing¹ and are likely the only chlamydia free colony in Australia². From a scientific, ecological, community and tourist perspective, the koalas of Campbelltown are priceless.

Few, if any, other major urban areas on earth can claim to support a species as globally recognised and valued as the koala. However, their long-term survival is being directly threatened by the level and speed of urbanisation projected for the Campbelltown and the Greater Macarthur area. In addition to major housing growth over the last few years, the Greater Sydney Commission has set a target of an additional 143,000 dwellings in the next 20 years to be built in south-western Sydney³. The NSW Government's proposed Greater Macarthur Priority Growth Area will deliver 33,000 of these⁴, on land that includes important koala corridors.

Already, major planning and development decisions are banking in extinction. In 2018, the NSW Department of Planning and Environment approved Campbelltown Council's rezoning application for the colonial era farm property known as 'Gilead', west of Appin Rd. Gilead is the shortest and most northern koala corridor between the Georges and Nepean Rivers. Just before Christmas the federal Department of the Environment and Energy, conditionally approved (EPBC 2015/7599) this development, (though thankfully rejecting the DPE's use of an existing council bush reserve 'Noorumba' as a Koala biobanking credit.), and has asked for a Koala Management Plan before proceeding. A whole landscape proposition to accommodate Koalas at this critical juncture is vital, before the piecemeal rezoning of Greater Macarthur ensures the slow eradication of Koalas in this area, and their local extinction.

The RMS have already singularly decided (against expert advice⁵) to run Koala exclusion fencing the length of Appin road to Appin without any east-west crossovers - this will empty

¹ McAlpine et. al. 2015. Conserving koalas: A review of the contrasting regional trends, outlooks and policy challenges. *Biological Conservation* 192 226-236.

² Rob Close 2018

³ <https://www.greater.sydney/digital-district-plan/992>

⁴ <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Plans-for-your-area/Priority-Growth-Areas-and-Precincts/Greater-Macarthur-Priority-Growth-Area>

⁵ *Koala Corridor Project Campbelltown City Council & Wollondilly Local Government Areas: Greater Macarthur Growth Area. - Report to NSW Office of Environment & Heritage*

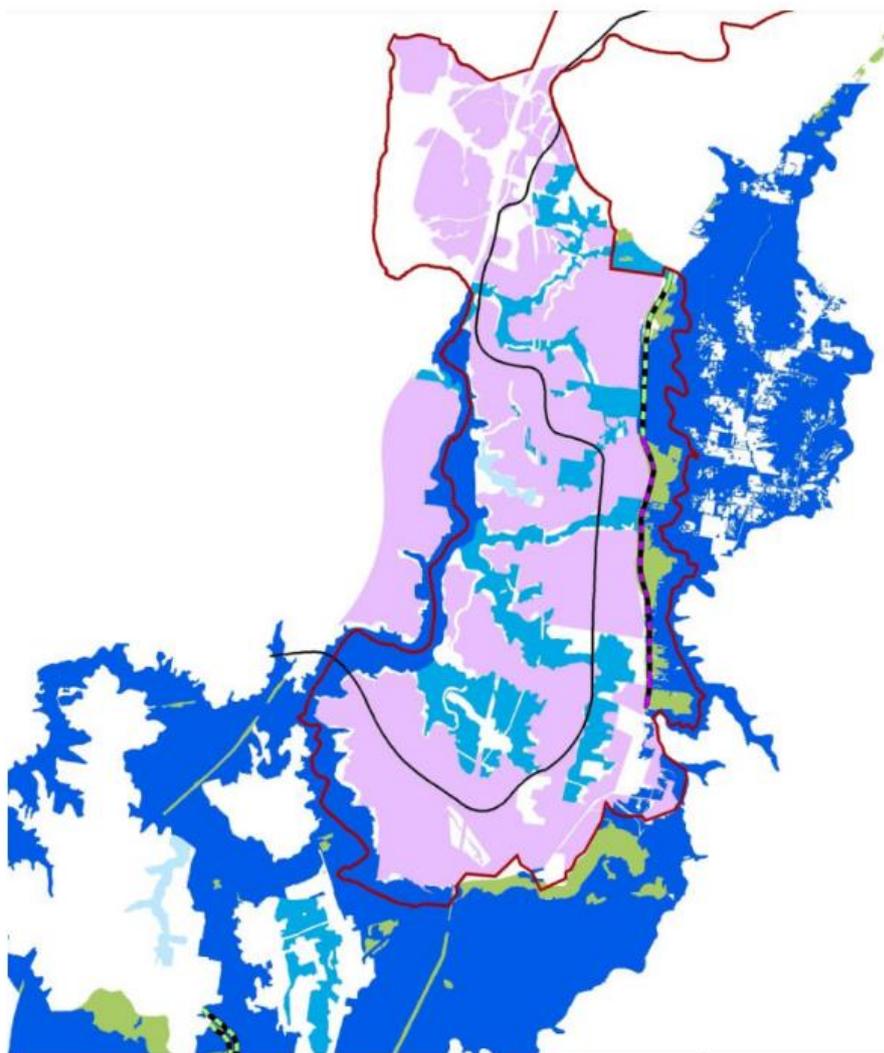
Biolink - October 2018

the Koala habitat west of Appin road of Koalas and make existing Koala Biobanking credits west of Appin road such as 'Beulah' and the one proposed by Lendlease at West Appin, redundant.

The cost will be the long term survival of the Campbelltown Chlamydia free Koala colony, as:

1. It will accelerate contact with the Chlamydia infected areas further south in the Southern Highlands.
2. There will be no east-west escapes/exits for Koalas in case of a large fire or other Koala threats emanating from the Holsworthy Army Base.
3. It dramatically reduces the options for Koala movements and funnels them into one super koala highway that could face any number of unforeseen blockages, obstacles, complications – certain to increase Koala stressors a cause of Chlamydia.

Wildlife corridors like human corridors need numerous and multiscaled avenues to provide resilience, as seen in the existing blue corridors illustrated below. Translocating Koalas is not a solution to a fragmenting landscape.



The exclusion fence shown dotted will remove Koala habitability and connectivity from the light blue and pink areas. The top light blue area 'secondary corridor' is Noorumba reserve connecting into Menangle Creek. The next light blue area down is Beulah connecting into Woodhouse Creek. The next light blue area down is Mallaty - Ousedale Creek. All these creeks will be sterilized not only of Koalas but other terrestrial wildlife such as macropods and possibly gliders.

Legend

- | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Greater Macarthur boundary | Corridors | Koala/development separation fence |
| Urban footprint | Primary | Koala road kill mitigation fence |
| Priority restoration areas | Secondary | Future koala road kill mitigation fence |
| Proposed transit corridor | Tertiary | |

NSW
Office of Environment & Heritage

Scale: 0 500 1000 1500 2000

Datum/Projection: GCS GDA 1984

We further note that:

- The NSW Government classifies koalas as an 'Iconic Species' in its Saving Our Species Strategy, and states that "iconic species are important socially, culturally and economically, and the community expects them to be effectively managed and protected".
- The NSW Government has not finalised its whole-of-government Koala Strategy, including its review of State Environmental Planning Policy No.44 – Koala Habitat protection.⁶
- Campbelltown Council's SEPP 44 Koala Management Plan has not been finalised and does not comply with current SEPP 44 requirements.
- The 'Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan' under the Greater Macarthur Corridor Strategy has not been finalised.
- The koala is listed as a vulnerable species under both NSW and federal legislation, and neither jurisdiction has a current Recovery Plan.
- There is no whole of landscape Koala corridor vision in place.

While the NSW government has recently announced some measures directed at koala conservation and new reserves east of Appin Road and the NSW Opposition has pledged the Georges River Koala National Park and the Two Rivers Koala Frontier Regional Park – there is more to do. We are appealing for bipartisan support to resolve and give legal standing, measures to ensure their conservation, before further zoning decisions pre-empt their survival.

A satisfactory and evidenced-based Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management must be prepared, exhibited, adopted and operationalised, with a whole of landscape koala corridor focus. We, the undersigned, also urge the NSW Government to apply conservation tenures to all public lands identified as containing koala habitat and/or a koala population, and refrain from using an offsite offset approach on these lands.

Yours sincerely,

Jeff Angel
Executive Director

This Statement is endorsed by:

⁶ <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/animals/nsw-koala-strategy.htm>

Georges River Koala Network



Georges River Environmental Alliance

Save Mt Gilead Inc.

Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society



Wilton Action Group

Keep Sydney Beautiful



National Parks Association of NSW (Macarthur Branch)



Hawkesbury Environment Network



Blue Mountains Conservation Society



Australians for Animals



Friends of the Koala



Koala Hospital, Port Macquarie



Nature Conservation Council of NSW



NSW Wildlife Information Rescue & Education Service



Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Services



World Wildlife Fund



The Wilderness Society



International Fund for Animal Welfare



National Parks Association

