

Response to Questions on Notice

Portfolio Committee No. 7 – Planning and Environment
Koala populations and habitat in NSW
Hearing, Friday 25 October 2019

Question 1: *Regarding the revisions undertaken in relation to Council's draft Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management*

I confirm that Dr Steve Phillips authored the draft Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (CKPOM) that was originally submitted to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) in 2016. It was also Dr Phillips whom worked on the revised draft that was re-submitted to the DPIE in November 2018.

I make reference to two reports that have been prepared to update Council on the CKPOM process, and are tabled herein:

- Council Planning and Environment Committee Meeting (10 May 2016): Campbelltown Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (Section 2.1)¹
- Council Ordinary Meeting (10 July 2018): Update of the Draft Campbelltown Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (Section 8.1)²

Question 2: *Copies of letters provided to State Government in relation to koala management, and State Government responses*

Council has written to various State Government agencies on a number of occasions to make representations outlining concerns on a range of koala conservation management related issues. A chronology of recent letters are listed below (and tabled herein, alongside copies of State Government responses received by Council).

- Correspondence: Council letter to Director General DPE re SEPP44, March 2015; and response received July 2015³
- Correspondence: Council letter to Greg Warren MP (Member for Campbelltown), August 2017; and response received⁴

¹ <https://www.campbelltown.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/document-resources/councilcouncillors/businesspapers/2016/17-may/d-planning-and-environment.pdf>

² https://www.campbelltown.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/document-resources/councilcouncillors/businesspapers/2018/10-july/v2public_ord-agenda-10.07.18.pdf

³ https://www.campbelltown.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/document-resources/councilcouncillors/businesspapers/2018/10-july/v2public_ord-agenda-10.07.18.pdf

⁴ <https://www.campbelltown.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/document-resources/councilcouncillors/businesspapers/2018/13-march/ord-agenda-13.03.18-public-copy.pdf>

- Correspondence: Council letter to the Hon Melinda Pavey MP (Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight), August 2017 (no response received)
- Correspondence: Council letter to the Hon Anthony Roberts, MP (Minister for Planning), May 2018; and response received⁵
- Correspondence: Council letter to the Hon Melissa Price MP (Minister for the Environment), November 2018; and response received⁶
- Correspondence: Council letter to the Hon Mathew Kean MP (Minister for Energy and Environment) and the Hon Dominic Francis Perrottet MP (NSW Treasurer), August 2019; and response received⁷

Question 3: *Smiths Creek Reserve – outline the history of that and koala activity and what it connects because it is an interesting case study*

Smiths Creek Reserve is located between the suburbs of Ruse and Leumeah, and exists as Campbelltown's largest urban bushland reserve, at 88 hectares in size (4 kilometres in length from north to south). The Reserve is primarily owned by the NSW Government (however is under Council's care, control and management). The Reserve is characterised by a steep gully and is strongly influenced by semi disturbed waterways; with an expanse of critically endangered Shale Sandstone Transition Forest ecological community listed under the NSW *Biodiversity Conservation Act, 2016*; in addition to remnants of Sydney Hinterland Grey Gum Ridge Top Forest and Sydney Hinterland Apple Blackbutt Gully Forest.

The Reserve is identified as containing core koala habitat under Councils CKPOM, with active vegetated linkages from the Georges River provided through a number of corridors that intersect Junction Road, providing a number of movement opportunities for koalas through the area.

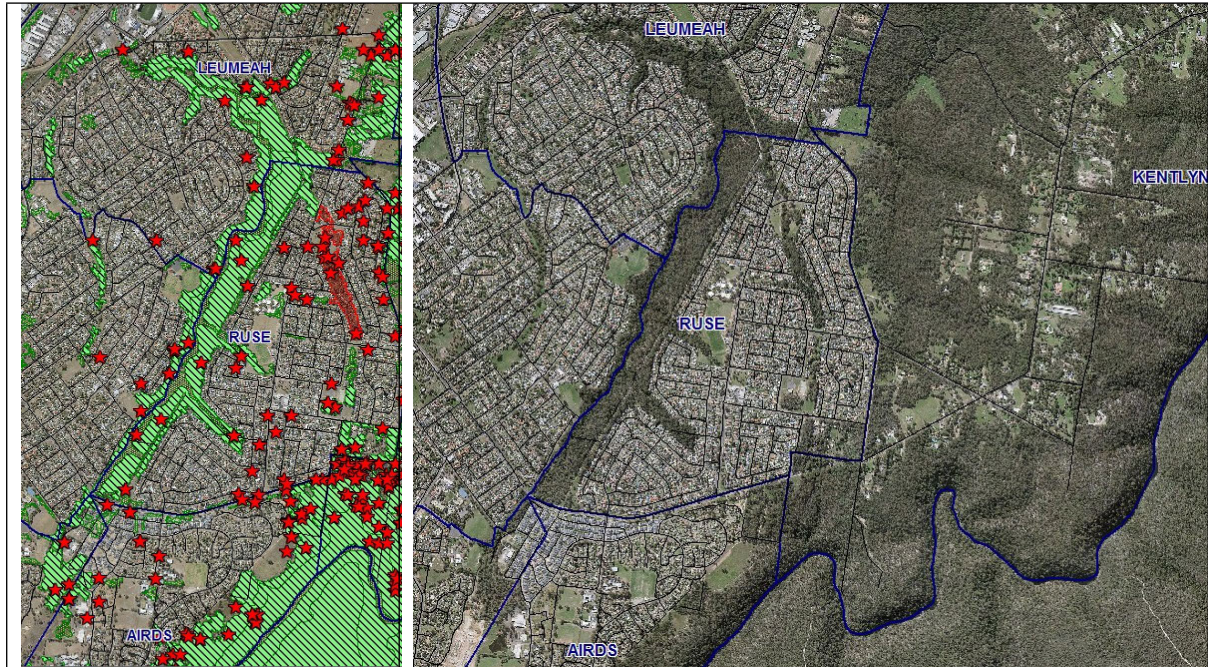
Anecdotal evidence of koalas was first reported by local residents (and Dr Rob Close) approximately 30 years ago, from the early 1990s. Council has received 27 recorded koala sightings from the Reserve over the last three years; including observations of breeding females with pouch young, and reports of bellowing males occupying territory.

⁵ <https://www.campbelltown.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/document-resources/councilcouncillors/businesspapers/2018/12-june/ordinary-meeting-agenda-12.06.18-public.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.campbelltown.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/document-resources/councilcouncillors/businesspapers/2019/14-may/ordinarymeetingagenda14may2019.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.campbelltown.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/document-resources/councilcouncillors/businesspapers/2019/12-november/ordinarymeetingagenda12november2019.pdf>

Figure 1: Smiths Creek Reserve (Left) Core koala habitat mapping and koala sightings (Right) Location of the Reserve in context of the Georges River



To date, Council has completed works across 26.31ha, and planted over 3,000 trees - including preferred koala food trees (PKFTs) across the site by a combination of community members and Council bush regeneration contractors. The works to date have seen \$150,000 invested by State government funding bodies, with Council contributing \$77,000 in on ground works and \$82,770 in in kind contributions for educational and project management related activities.

The Reserve is a successful working example of how koalas can adapt to living in peri-urban environments surrounded by urban development. This is further supported by the results of a recent study that found koalas living in urban landscapes to be less stressed than those in rural areas as long as the city incorporated adequate areas of suitable habitat into the matrix⁸.

Question 4: Regarding the Departments average turn around time for assessing Individual Koala Plans of Management

On liaising with our Council Planning Officers, I can confirm that the average turn-around time for the assessment and concurrence from the DPIE on Individual Koala Plans of Management (IKPOMs), is on average, around 6–16 weeks.

Question 5: Regarding the date of submission of the revised draft CKPOM to the DPIE

I can confirm that our draft CKPOM was originally submitted to the DPIE on 23 December, 2016. Formal feedback was provided to Council by the DPIE on the 18 December 2017.

⁸ Narayan, E (2019) Physiological stress levels in wild koala sub-populations facing anthropogenic induced environmental trauma and disease. *Scientific reports* 9:6031

The revised draft CKPOM was re-submitted to the DPIE on 12 November 2018, and Council has not received any formal feedback to date. I have included dates of email and phone representations made by our Senior Environmental Officer managing the project, below. This in addition to enquiries made to the DPIE by Senior Management, including myself.

- Revised draft CKPOM resubmitted to the DPIE (dated 12 November 2018)
- Email to Chantelle Chow (dated 8 May 2019) – response on 9 May advising still awaiting feedback
- Email to Chantelle Chow (dated 8 July 2019) – response on 23 July advising that no internal referrals had been received to date.
- Phonecall to Chantelle Chow and voicemail (dated 18 September 2019) – no response
- Email to new delegate, Thomas Holmes (dated 24 September 2019) – no response
- Email to Chantelle Chow (dated 28 October 2019) – response on 28 October advising that the Biodiversity teams comments have been received and that DPIE will be in touch with Council to discuss the matters raised

Sincerely,

Fletcher Rayner
Executive Manager
Urban Release and Engagement