

**Submission  
No 53**

**INQUIRY INTO KOALA POPULATIONS AND HABITAT IN  
NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Name:** The Hon. Mark Latham

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## **Individual Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Koala populations and habitat in NSW**

**23 July 2019**

There is an urgent wildlife protection issue south of Campbelltown that requires the Committee's attention. Over many decades an important koala habitat has been identified in the Wedderburn district. It extends south from Long Point near the Georges River to just north of Appin. This takes in the Gilead open space (between Menangle Park and Appin Road, south of Rosemeadow), currently the subject of several residential development applications being processed by Campbelltown Council.

There is substantial local opposition to the development but the Council is pushing it through. The development is another unnecessary example of unserviced, environmentally-damaging urban sprawl in South-West Sydney.

Gilead is highly significant as it has a shale base, making its trees attractive for koalas as they transit from the Georges River areas to the Nepean River. This relatively narrow space between the two rivers has high biodiversity value. Campbelltown Council employed Dr Steven Phillips to undertake a survey into koalas on Mount Gilead and he found not only that the property is being used by a high number of koalas, but also squirrel-gliders. Both of these animals are listed as vulnerable in NSW.

Dr Phillips recommended for the wildlife corridors not to be compromised or destroyed. His conclusions are repeated in reports from Prof. Mathew Crowther, Prof. Robert Close, Dr. Clive McAlpine, Dr. Martin Schulz, and Dr. Edward Narayan, all who agree that wildlife corridors must be maintained. This material can be found at <https://campbelltownkoalaresearchanddatabase.com/>

So far, the advice given by these respected environmental consultants appears to have been ignored. The biodiversity corridors included in the development applications are too narrow, and lead to nowhere. There is also the wacky idea of building an 'exclusion fence' alongside Appin Road to keep the koalas in. On every front, the Campbelltown Council plan for koala protection is inadequate.

The Gilead development should not proceed, given its hopelessly inadequate koala and other wildlife protection.

I urge you to examine the possibility of protection zones extending from Long Point to Gilead. The public land is available alongside the Georges River, east of Campbelltown, to make this a reality, while halting the Gilead residential development to the south would also open up protection possibilities alongside the Nepean River.

Thank you for your inquiry into this matter, particularly for identifying key areas of koala habitat currently at risk. I hope the Committee will be able to visit these valuable sites in the near future. It's an excellent opportunity for environmental protection at the interface between Sydney's urban edge and south-west hinterland.

We must act now before urban sprawl wipes out the koala colony.

**The Hon. Mark Latham MLC**