

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

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Date Received: 28 July 2019

Partially
Confidential

28th July 2019

SUBMISSION: Koala populations and habitat in New South Wales

Thank you for allowing us to submit a submission into the state of koalas in NSW, my knowledge is mainly restricted to the local koala population and I have aimed this submission to the protection of these animals, but regard all native animals including koalas as part of the ecosystem that is required to keep the planet healthy.

It is unfortunate that unless the panel has the power to delay development until they have made their report and it has been accepted by the government the Campbelltown koala population will have been seriously endangered by subdivision and the installation of new roads.

I have referred to the koala population as the Campbelltown population, but this, of course, refers to all koalas living in the South West region of Sydney including Sutherland.

HISTORY

Although there were a few extinctions of native flora and fauna once the Aboriginal people had landed in Australia 40,000 years ago, perhaps even longer in the Cape York region, it wasn't until Europeans arrived and cleared vast areas of bushland that the extinction of native animals escalated and in only 200 years we have become the continent with the most amount of extinction in the world.

Now and then an animal that was thought to be extinct in some areas is found and this was the case of the koala when it was rediscovered at Wedderburn by David Homer in 1986 and thus the Wedderburn Koala population was recognised.

Prof. Robert Close and his team undertook a 27 year study of koalas in the region, 200 were tagged and 39 were tracked with radio collars

In a recent report, Campbelltown considered there were only 200 koalas in the population, the State government has stated there are over 300, Prof. Close's Reports states there are 1000.

Shortly after this koalas were found in Kentlyn and the name of the population changed to the Campbelltown Koala population, but now this population has expanded down through Appin, north to Liverpool, east to Heathcote National Park and west to the Australian Botanic Gardens.

Now, unfortunately, each council area appears to have adopted a part of the population and they are referred to as the Wilton Koala population, Liverpool Koala population, the Sutherland

population and the Campbelltown Koala population and a new name does need to be found to encompass the original population. We have suggested the South West population. but the name has not been widely accepted.

Dr. Tristan Lee undertook DNA testing of koalas within this population which proved that all koalas in this region were one population, later it was found that there are three main populations, one at Campbelltown, another in the Blue Mountains and yet another in the Southern Highlands. There is possibly a fourth population living in bushland behind Wollongong.

<https://campbelltownkoalaresearchanddatabase.com/> (CKRD)

We now know that the Campbelltown population is the only Chlamydia free and expanding population on mainland Australia, although Kangaroo Island animals are free of the disease they cannot be considered to be successful because they are not able to expand beyond the Island. Those that have been relocated at great expense have a problem with kidney dysfunction and 35% of the population are sick or dying.

Dr. Clive McAlpine's Report on the need to protect the Campbelltown Koala population can be seen in his report on the web page at: Campbelltown Koala Research and Database.com. He states within the report that the Campbelltown population is the only Chlamydia free and expanding population left in New South Wales, but it is now widely accepted that this has now spread to the whole of the Australian mainland. (CKRD)

ENDANGERING THE CAMPBELLTOWN KOALA POPULATION

SEPP44

When the plan was out for comment in the mid 1990's we sent a submission into the then National Parks and Wildlife Service asking that local tree species from the Macarthur region were including into the list of preferred koala feed trees, unfortunately, as we understand it funding was not available for the panel to revisit the Plan and therefore, Macarthur trees were not included and therefore, the Plan has not greatly protected koalas in this region.

CAMPBELLTOWN KOALA PLAN OF MANAGEMENT

We understand that the Campbelltown Koala Plan of Management has been held up within State Government because no agreement could be made and the future of the koala population depends on whether or not development will destroy the majority of the habitat and wildlife corridors.

This problem needs to be resolved and the Campbelltown Koala Plan of Management implemented. Habitat loss through subdivision, the widening of Appin Road and building new roads such as the Spring Farm Link Road and Georges River Parkway and inappropriate fencing and concrete barriers will destroy the population.

WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

When a decision to subdivide properties along Appin Road was adopted by State Government, no on ground surveys were undertaken and as Council does not liaise with local residents it is unclear whether or not the council requested that these surveys for koalas or other native be done.

RMS intend to fence the eastern side of Appin Road, a concrete barrier will be installed outside Mount Gilead and another fence in the front of Noorumba Reserve. It is unclear if any other fencing will be installed as Department of Planning and RMS keep changing their minds as to where or if fencing will be installed.

It has been suggested that koalas will move down along the Georges River cross over the Emplacement Area, then cross the Appin Bulli Road, find the Cataract River, follow the river and meet up with the Nepean River and then move north along the Nepean River to the back of Mount Gilead and carry on their journey to the west.

The Emplacement area is approximately 4km by 1.5km a dump used to store coal reject, in other words, a coal dump, the area spreads from the back of the coal head and offices right down into and eventually including Brennans Creek Dam just a short distance from the Georges River. Once this was a beautiful valley where the majority of water that flowed into the Georges River was sourced from in the Appin area, but today it is a steadily moving mountain that can be seen as far away as the Dharawal National Park, O'Hares Creek Lookout at Wedderburn.

At the moment movement is slow on the Emplacement Area, because only one longwall mine is working, but in the future when two longwalls are working or reject has to be brought to the area once more from Dendrobium Mine huge areas of woodland will need to be cleared.

Regeneration of woodland is created once the area is completed and South 32 do put a lot of effort into creating as natural an area as possible, but of, course it takes years before a tree is large enough for it to be considered as koala habitat and whether koala trees are planted.

If koalas move south from Cataract River they will meet up with the Southern Highlands Koala population and probably contract Chlamydia, but this is only if they are not killed by vehicles or starvation on the way and they will then be moving into territory held by other koalas and have to fight for space and in a weakened state from the journey and stress be killed by existing koalas.

Koalas were translocated to Tarlo River from Campbelltown and one contracted Chlamydia, this animal had to be brought back to Campbelltown for medical treatment, which dispels the belief by members of the government that Campbelltown Koalas are immune to the disease. Others died or were lost.

The other alternative for koalas living along the Georges River is to move into the Holsworthy Military Reserve, but unfortunately, the woodland is not prime koala habitat and available territories have already been taken by the existing koalas. Any koala entering the Reserve will need to either

fight a larger more experienced animal for space or keep moving to avoid being killed by the resident animals. (See Prof. Robert Close's Report (CKRD) and the extremely quick movement of koalas across the Reserve within his Report)

Despite Council and State Government knowing that koalas were utilising the area their habitat was destroyed for housing, within a few weeks of residents moving into the new suburb one koala had been killed by a dog and other had to be relocated by WIRES volunteers.

A COMPARISON OF COUNCIL AREAS

WOLLODILLY SHIRE COUNCIL REGION

Wollondilly Council and the Office of Environment were given a very generous grant to locate, collar and track koalas, the public were encouraged to report any koala they saw in this region, fencing and underground passes have been installed, although some koala habitat will still be destroyed.

14 koalas were tracked and of these one died of old age, one was killed by vehicle strike and another died of Chlamydia. (12 tracked within Wollondilly and 2 within Wingecabbee Council areas)

It appears that from these studies it has been concluded that there are thousands of koalas with this region.

CAMPBELLTOWN CITY COUNCIL

There were no surveys undertaken, the public was not asked to report koalas

Prof. Robert Close's 27 year Report has been ignored, he tagged 200 koalas, 39 were tracked, 4450 tracked records and 3679 public sightings and at Airds despite Council and State Government knowing there were male, female and female with young koalas in the area, habitat was cleared, one koala killed by a dog and others relocated by volunteers. Further clearing has recently been undertaken.

The wildlife corridor at Airds has been cut.

On the 27th July 2019, the local planning panel allowed the dewatering of dams, 50,000 cubic tonnes of fill to be imported into Mount Gilead and mature trees cut down and destroyed, despite no permission to build homes being given.

This wildlife corridor between the Georges and Nepean Rivers will be cut all animals living on the western side of Appin Road will be allowed to die out or be translocated by local volunteers.

From these records, the government and the council assumed that there are between 200 and 300 koalas within the region.

PROPOSED GEORGES RIVER PARKWAY ROAD

We had been assured that this road would not be needed by the Department of Planning, however it is now back on the books and being investigated within the Greater Macarthur 2040 Plan, furthermore, Campbelltown Council has a new Plan out on display for comment at the moment which shows that most of the land along the western side of the proposed road is being investigated for subdivision. (Campbelltown Council 2040 LSPS)

This road will cut right through the main resident koala population along the Georges River from Glenfield to Appin and make the population unviable. see web site: <https://npansw.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Georges-River-NP-Proposal-complete-31.08.2017.pdf>

PROPOSED UPPER GEORGES RIVER NATIONAL PARK

The proposed Upper Georges River National Park would protect the koala population along the river, but they would still require room to expand to the north, south, and west to ensure the health of the population. They will also need to be able to enter the Holsworthy Military Reserve, where there are no plans to build houses or roads in this region as yet.

If The Georges River Parkway Road goes ahead this will slice right through the koala population and this would also need to be taken off the agenda.

When the Georges River Parkway Road is installed the Campbelltown Koala population will be cut in half along the entire length of the Georges River between Glenfield and Appin. Habitat will be lost and although the river backs onto the Holsworthy Military Reserve the woodland communities within the Reserve are not prime koala habitat, and territories within the Reserve have already been taken by resident koalas.

Each Koala within the Reserve requires approximately 100 hectares to exist, (Prof. Robert Close) The fact that koalas cross the Reserve very quickly when they leave Campbelltown which can be seen in Prof. Robert Close's Report indicates that either they are chased out of the area, or that the woodland is not of good quality. : <https://npansw.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Georges-River-NP-Proposal-complete-31.08.2017.pdf>

MOUNT GILEAD – CAMPBELLTOWN CITY COUNCIL

In regard to the subdivision of Mount Gilead which is the only viable wildlife corridor between the Georges and Nepean Rivers, mainly because there is bushland on each side of the Appin Road, Beulah and Noorumba Reserve both join the property and male, female, and females with joeys have been found to be living on all of these properties including Mount Gilead using paddock trees and groves of native trees to move through the property.

Expert opinion is that the corridor across Mount Gilead must not be broken because a healthy koala population needs to expand, Reports by Dr. Steven Phillips, Prof. Matthew Crowther, and Dr. Dan

Lunny can be read on the Campbelltown Koala and Database (CKRD). All these reports support the retention of the wildlife corridor across Mount Gilead.

A report by Dr. Martin Schulz highlights the importance of paddock trees and this can also be found on the web site. This Report was undertaken on land on the eastern side of Appin Road which has been identified as development land for 550 houses within the Campbelltown Council 2040 LSPS

The present government has said they will not develop the eastern side of Appin Road, but appears they may have changed their mind subdivision for 550 lots is being investigated by Campbelltown Council.

Another report by Dr. Edward Narayan proves that stress is the main cause of Chlamydia and loss of habitat and wildlife corridors does indeed cause stress, again this report can be found on the Campbelltown Research and Database web site.

Animals living on the western side of the Appin Road will be allowed to either die out or be translocated, there is no Plan of Management in place to deal with these animals and at this time it appears that local volunteers will have to decide where to relocate these animals. (verbal conversation at the so-called round table meetings with OEH, RMS and Department of Planning chaired by

The presence of koalas was ignored at a new subdivision at Airs within a few months of residents moving into their property at least one koala was killed by a dog and others had to be relocated by local volunteers. Unfortunately, neither the Campbelltown Council nor the State Government listened to local residents and we sent a map showing the movements of a female koala which was also ignored. This animal later died along with her Joey on Appin Road. Further clearing of habitat has only recently taken place.

Unfortunately, when the State Government rezoned the Mount Gilead property they had been lead to believe that there were no koalas on the western side of the Appin Campbelltown Road and they appear to still be ignoring this fact even though it is shown on the BioNet Atlas that there are koalas reaching across to the Botanic Gardens.

RMS and a letter ex-Minister for Planning Anthony Roberts MP in response to a petition has suggested that they will not build an overhead corridor across Appin Road at Mount Gilead because it would mean taking out too many trees, but we have shown the new Minister for the Environment's senior adviser photographs of an area that has been mostly cleared of vegetation on the eastern side of the road at the north side of Mount Gilead that would be an ideal spot for a wildlife corridor and from here animals could easily move into Noorumba Reserve

Wollondilly Shire Council sent a petition of some 13,500 signatures to the State Government requesting that the koala population be protected and we sent another petition of 5,000 signatures asking for the same protection of koalas in South West Sydney along with that the Mount Gilead property and its heritage and wildlife corridors be protected, no compromise was made by the Department.

State Government has suggested they may install a wildlife corridor in Appin at Ousedale Creek which would be a good thing, but there are houses on the eastern side of the road, the animals would need to negotiate around the greyhound track, paintball installation and the motocross track and this area has been identified in the past as a route for the Appin bypass road.

GENETIC DIVERSIFICATION

It has been suggested that as the Campbelltown Koala Population has expanded from approximately 20 animals they are not worth saving because they do not have enough genetic diversification, but we would like to point out the Giant Panda population in captivity only stem from four male animals and yet they seem to be expanding and are now being sent all over the world, where funding is paid to be used in China's successful Panda breeding programme.

China's reputation for the protection of Giant Pandas and birds is far higher than that of Australia which is being let down by what appears to be uncaring government practices.

Furthermore, in recent times two koalas have been found near to the Georges River and although these animals both had ear tags they were not tagged in any programme in the local region. This would suggest that with a careful breeding programme at a zoo, probably Simbios in the Illawarra where local tree species are used, animals could be released into the local koala population as long as they were guaranteed Chlamydia free and of the same size, etc., of the local animals.

TRANSLOCATION

Prof. Robert Close's Report on the web site shows that this has been tried and failed when Campbelltown koalas were released at Tarlo River some disappeared, others died and one contracted Chlamydia and had to be returned to Campbelltown for medical attention. She was recently found at Appin and caused some concern as it was thought a sick animal had moved north into the area.

Kangaroo Island translocation chose to deal with the problem of too many koalas on one island and at great expense (over \$2000 per animal) they were translocated to the mainland.

South Australian translocated koalas from Kangaroo Island are suffering from renal failure and Chlamydia a quote from Dr. Natasha Speight in regard to Koalas.

"It had appeared they had been a thriving population (in Mount Lofty Ranges) but what we've found from the 31 koalas we've tested is that 77 percent of those had koala retrovirus and also 33 percent Chlamydia infection.

The Mount Lofty population also has a high rate of kidney disease, called oxalate nephrosis, which is another serious health threat for koalas in the state"

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-11-25/koala-disease-levels-worry-adelaide-researchers/5917782>

I understand that most koalas do carry the retrovirus and when combined with stress this can cause renal dysfunction.

COOMERA Translocated animals in this experiment allowed 99% of the animals to die, but I believe residents from that area will send a submission to the panel and they have more knowledge of this failed experiment than I do.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND DROUGHT

Some Koala populations will have problems dealing with the extra heat and drought of Climate change, but this does not mean they should be disregarded as native animals have adapted to changes of climate and vegetation over millions of years. Logically speaking if they had not they would be extinct.

The main problem will be that these populations will not be able to move into new areas, because of logging or subdivision. If there are wildlife corridor already in place or sufficient paddock trees remain they should be retained, but if these corridors have been cut then new tree and bush lined corridors could be installed to allow animals to move at their own pace in the future.

For a newly planted wildlife corridor to work and remain healthy trees, bushes and even grasses should be planted to enable birds and other creatures to move in and help protect plants by eating parasitic insects.

Bell Minor birds should be discouraged as they cause an infestation of trees known as bell miner associated dieback (BMAD)

It must also be taken into consideration that newly planted trees will take at least 20 years before they can be considered as true koala habitat.

Patricia Durman

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