

**Submission
No 114**

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

Name: Mrs Elizabeth Gossell

Date Received: 30 July 2019

1. This property of Mt Gilead should be heritage listed and deserving of serious consideration before redevelopment. The rapid development of Narellan, Gregory Hills, Oran Park, etc has already changed a considerable part of Macarthur, once the birthplace of Australian rural industry. We cannot get it back once it is gone and the problems of traffic, infrastructure and general loss of amenity has produced some of the worst new development I have seen on very small blocks with all trees cleared prior to road building and very few planted afterwards. Ask any resident how they feel about the extreme overbuilding of an already crowded Macarthur!
2. This proposed redevelopment for residential housing is on land that runs right down to the Georges River and adjoins important koala habitat already endangered by what has been done in the last 10 years. This koala colony is the only known disease-free colony in NSW and Chlamydia has threatened nearly all existing colonies with a disease that has the potential to wipe out koalas in NSW. This national symbol needs habitat, not strips of land isolated and unconnected to larger areas of bush. Without it, they cannot thrive and will eventually disappear. The more development placed near them, the sooner it will happen. Cars, dogs and other risks of living near humans is already having a big impact – some 17 koala were killed in one two month period recently on the roads nearby. Every loss of an individual is a blow to maintaining this important colony as a viable population.
3. The koala colony moves between the Georges and the Nepean River and all lands along the river should be protected from development in line with maintaining the rivers' health and supporting koala habitat.
4. One thing Macarthur is not short of is people – the rapid development of the area will continue to cause difficulties not yet apparent and then there is the second airport, again, perilously close to the areas I am discussing and which create yet more threats to the viability of the koala colony.
5. Surely, there is some point at which the community is entitled to push back against rampant development especially when unintended consequences are piling up as a result, such as possible extinction of a viable colony of wildlife.
6. So far as I know, there is no plan, either from Council or the State Government to protect into the future this koala habitat. The Biodiversity Conservation Act much trumpeted by the State Government is a sham and will result in carte blanche for developers whilst koala and other threatened native species are lost, and totally unsuitable 'other' land used to offset this loss, such as Mrs Berejiklian's so-called Koala Park to the west, much trumpeted, but also very unsuitable. Koala do not translocate – they have a mortality rate of approximately 50% for the first year after translocation. This is a shell game con which the public sees and they will hold the State Government responsible for it.
8. Please do not participate in this action to develop Mt Gilead for residential housing. Macarthur has done its part and shouldered a huge amount of residential development in the areas mentioned above closer to Sydney. More will no doubt come with the second airport. Let Mt Gilead stand as testament to at least one government body understanding the significance and importance of history and the koala colony along the Georges and Nepean River catchments. It makes sense to conserve catchments – we need the water in this dry continent, so to jeopardise it and the inhabitants who also need it is short-sighted in the extreme. The local dams there are below 50% so putting more development in the absence of enough water is crazy
9. I hope that your government will not be accorded the notoriety of being the cause of the beginning of the end for Macarthur's koalas and the loss of an important property of Australia's Heritage – Mt Gilead!
- 10 I do not know what to tell my children about what is happening to the koala in their area. We live on the Georges River and the koala we once saw regularly now only occasionally are found dead on the roads as a direct result of the huge amount of development that has taken place along the river catchments.

11. What concerns us terribly, is that these plans seem to get bigger all the time with NO provision for the inhabitants or wildlife already there! No overpasses or underpasses are contained in any of the development works, only totally inadequate fencing, which will not work, any investigation of it will show. So, it appears that NO CARE at all has been displayed towards the only disease-free koala colony in the Sydney area, almost a planned extinction rather than a casual one. Shame on the government that perpetrates this, they will be known around the world for their callous attitude to a national icon - our wonderful koala!! We just had overseas visitors who spent a good portion of their holiday doing the one thing they most wanted to do - see our koala in the wild. Sadly, the only ones we could find are in zoos of some type. They could not believe what is happening here in relation to the koala, or should I say not happening. and they will take that story back with them and spread the shame of it.

12. It is your job as the State Government to protect and nurture this koala population. It is not the job of individuals like myself to tackle the problem, but YOUR job to weigh up the consequences of your zonings and legislation on the native wildlife. I cannot see you have done this at all - rather it appears you have done everything to maximise the financial rewards for developers, many of whom are not even Australian, PLEASE reconsider what is proposed and make substantial changes to accomplish at least 3 things!

- a. Save and protect the koala colony in situ, including existing trees.
- b. Reduce the size of any development at Mt Gilead that threatens the koala.
- c. Promote ongoing examination of alternate ways to help maintain the health of the river catchments and the wildlife that depend upon them.

Thank you,

E B Gossell