

INQUIRY INTO KOALA POPULATIONS AND HABITAT IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Help Save Appin Inc

Date Received: 2 August 2019

SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE KOALA POPULATION & HABITAT BY LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO.7.

PRESEVATION OF CHLAMYDIA FREE KOALAS AT MACARTHUR

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS HIGHLY RELEVANT TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE NO 7.

The Committee's attention needs to focus on the state's only expanding and Chlamydia disease free colony of Koalas at Macarthur and the fact that their habitat is about to be seriously impacted by developer Lend Lease's newest development called Figtree Hill at Mount Gilead.

Mount Gilead is an important corridor for Koala expansion westward from the Georges River to the Nepean River and beyond. This was clearly established by Dr Steve Phillips' **South Campbelltown Koala Habitat Connectivity Study** - November 2017. **SCKHCS field work, 2017 ... Strategic koala habitat corridor study** - March 2017.

The developer and Campbelltown City Council deny Mount Gilead is core habitat for these unique disease free koalas. However acquisition of koala credits by the developer from adjacent Noorumba Reserve, which Council owns and maintains under a separate plan of management for conservation and public recreation, confirms that both developer and Council are aware of an established koala presence on and around Mount Gilead land.

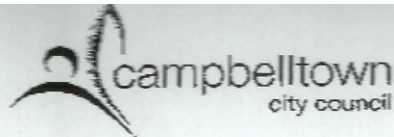
It is very evident the whole of Mount Gilead farmland with its areas of critically endangered ecological communities of CPW and SSTF and scattered paddock trees are important koala habitat that should be kept free of the roads, dogs, people and houses that new urban development inflicts on the land.

It is a great concern that developers, councils and indeed all levels of government use koalas as pawns in the development game. They recognise koalas when it suits their political or other agendas but otherwise ignore their existence or deliberately diminish the importance of their presence.

Indeed, in 2008 Campbelltown City Council used the presence of Koalas to stop AGL from building a gas fired Power Plant at Leaf's Gully, which is adjacent to Mount Gilead's southern boundary and only about 3km south-west of the Mount Gilead Urban Release area, now called Figtree Hill. (Please see Figure 1 photomap attached)

Council did not use the same persuasive approach to prevent Mount Gilead development. Council was noticeably quiet about koalas even after Steve Phillips' **Connectivity Study**, that they commissioned, revealed a significant koala presence.

However this is what Campbelltown Council said about onsite koalas in its submission in objection to Leaf's Gully Power Plant:



22 April 2009

Mr S Jefferies
Major Assessments Branch
Department of Planning
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Mr Jefferies

MAJOR PROJECT APPLICATION NUMBER 08-0077 - LEAFS GULLY FARM, APPIN ROAD, CAMPBELLTOWN - AGL GAS TURBINE POWER STATION - CAMPBELLTOWN CITY COUNCIL SUBMISSION

Council has reviewed the Environmental Assessment accompanying the Project Application for the abovementioned power station proposal and would like to make a submission on the matter for the Department's consideration.

In considering the matter at its Ordinary Meeting on 7 April 2009, Council resolved to express its strongest objection to the Project Application for the Leafs Gully AGL Gas Turbine Power Station for the following reasons.

....

3. State Environmental Planning Policy No. 44 - Koala Habitat Protection (SEPP 44)

SEPP 44 applies to the Leafs Gully Power Project as the site is located within the Campbelltown Local Government Area (listed in Schedule 1 of SEPP 44 as land to which SEPP 44 applies).

The Flora and Fauna Assessment prepared identifies potential koala habitat within the site. Where potential habitat is identified, the area must be investigated for core koala habitat, defined as an area of land with a resident breeding population of koalas, evidenced by attributes such as breeding females and recent sightings and historical records of a

population. Where core koala habitat is found to occur, SEPP 44 requires that a site-specific Koala Plan of Management be prepared.

The Applicant has indicated that core koala habitat was not identified on the site and hence a Koala Management Plan is not required under SEPP 44

Council has reviewed The Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment prepared by URS and the Project Review: Koala Outcomes prepared by Eco Logical Australia (Dr Steven Ward) for the Leaf's Gully Power Project. Both reports indicate that the land subject to the Part 3A application (Lots 101 to 105 DP 716209 "Leaf's Gully Farm" Appin Road, Mt Gilead) constitutes "Potential Koala Habitat" in accordance with State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) No 44 – Koala Habitat Protection.

As outlined in the Koala Outcomes Report, this is evidenced by the mapping of the site as preferred koala habitat on the Campbelltown Koala Habitat Planning Map (CCC 2005), the presence and abundance of suitable food trees, and the proximity of the site to known koala areas.

Within the Koala Outcomes Report, factors suggest that the site could also be used by a resident population of koalas. Supporting this view is the fact that remnant vegetation on the study site, Shale Sandstone Transition Forest (SSTF), includes areas occurring on soils derived from shale-based substrates. As evidenced in Ward S (2002) *Koalas and the Community: a study of low density populations in southern Sydney*. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Western Sydney, this is of particular importance as female koalas with access to vegetation on such soils have been found to have higher fertility rates than female koalas with access to vegetation occurring on soils derived from sandstone-based substrates.

In *Urban Wildlife: more than meets the eye*, Royal Zoological Society of NSW Mosman, it was found that SSTF, exhibits the highest level of relative exploitation by koalas compared to any other vegetation type within the Campbelltown region.

Clarification is therefore required as to whether the site constitutes "Core Koala Habitat" in accordance with SEPP 44. It is considered that neither the Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment nor the Koala Outcomes Report have undertaken a sufficient assessment to rule out the presence of core koala habitat within the site. In this regard, it is recommended that additional koala surveys be undertaken prior to a decision being reached as to whether a site specific Koala Plan of Management needs to be prepared for the site in accordance with the requirements of SEPP 44.

It is also important to note that SEPP 44 applies to the site irrespective of whether the development applies to the whole or only part of the site.

It is noted that the recommendation to undertake additional plantings along Mallatys Creek to the south of the site as outlined within the Koala Outcomes Report has not been incorporated into the development proposal.

Therefore it is considered that the Application has not satisfactorily addressed SEPP 44.

Campbelltown City Council has made no such attempt to save koalas at adjoining Mount Gilead.

You need to make your own decision.

We think Gilead is another reminder that councils, government agencies, ministers and developers need to lift their game.

We won't stop telling them



For you attention
With thanks
John Gay Help Save Appin Inc.