

Submission  
No 229

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 1 August 2019

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Partially  
Confidential

Submission re Inquiry into koala populations and habitat in New South Wales.

I wish to address the points in the Terms of Reference based on my interest in my local environment in and around Campbelltown, in particular in relation to our local Koala colony; my involvement with local Bushcare groups; my interest in council activities regarding local environment; my involvement in the peaceful Koala Rally in Campbelltown in June 2018 (which the Hon. Penny Sharpe and Mark Pearson attended); and my involvement with volunteer wildlife rescuers and rehabilitators.

(a) The Koala population in Campbelltown is thriving. Their numbers are increasing every year, and this colony is relatively disease-free, which is of itself almost unheard of across NSW. Koalas from this colony have been tracked and seen over many years over a significant area, covering Liverpool, Sutherland, Darkes Forest, Appin, and even as far west as Mt Annan, and more recently the Mount Annan Botanic Gardens.

The Campbelltown Koalas are suffering from increasing pressures from Sydney's expansion. Campbelltown was always on Sydney's outskirts – lying between the bushland of the Georges River to our east, the Scenic Hills to our west, overdeveloped Liverpool to our north, and rural vistas and farmland to our south. But now pressure from overpopulation, from developer groups and from State government to develop bushland and rural landscapes into housing estates and more roads is resulting in an exponential increase in Koala injuries and deaths via their key threats: vehicle strike, habitat destruction and dog attack.

I understand that climate change of itself will cause increasing stress to Koalas and also force them to search for territory in urban areas thanks to water run-off so we need to protect as much Koala habitat as we can right now, and our politicians need to lead the way rather than the bureaucrats.

Urban design principles need to urgently change as well – originally the only suburbs of Campbelltown that interfaced with bushland (and most wildlife) were large acreages. This helped protect wildlife. But now we are seeing increasing development in bushland areas, of areas adjacent to bushland, and also of open spaces and farmland into modern tightly packed urban design which brings more cars, more roads, more dogs, and more stress to Koalas. St Helens Park is a prime example, with constant Koala sightings. The Airds (Newbrook) redevelopment is another – where major koala corridors have and will be destroyed.

Any creek line leading to Core Koala Habitat needs to be preserved. And any ecology reports commissioned by developers need to rely on thorough and long-term field studies done in the middle of breeding season (ie. not the typical desktop studies and/or field studies that are conducted over a short period of time outside of breeding season).

Land surrounding Core Koala Habitat (CKH) needs to be valued as dearly as CKH – for example, the bushland on the eastern side of Appin Road in the Campbelltown LGA is recognised as CKH, the farmland and bushland reserves directly over the road on the western side of Appin Road have multiple Koala sightings and Koala scats that have been recorded and yet there is no compulsion for the State Government or the developer to provide proper wildlife crossings to stop wildlife and habitat being fragmented by the impending widening of Appin

Road. To cut off koalas on one side of this major road by fencing the road without building underpasses or overpasses will most likely result in death and disease amongst the Koala colony.

It could be helpful if there is a way for the public to record Koala sightings accurately online so that authorities can reliably transpose the details onto Bionet.

(b) Regulations and rules regarding destruction of trees on private property needs to be changed. The amount of land clearing on large properties bordering bushland that contains CKH needs to be much better balanced to ensure that more established Koala feed trees and hollow-bearing trees are retained.

(c) The SEPP 44 is inadequate. The tree species in Campbelltown that are favoured by local Koalas are not all listed in Schedule 2 “Feed tree species”. For example, according Phillips & Callaghan in “Tree species preferences of koalas (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) in the Campbelltown area south-west of Sydney, New South Wales”, p.514:

“While confirmation of *E. punctata* as a preferred food tree species was not unexpected given the widespread acknowledgment of its perceived importance to koalas, the suggestion that *E. agglomerata* is equally important was not so expected”.

This tree species is not listed in the SEPP 44.

Plus the Campbelltown Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management still has not been approved by the NSW Government to my knowledge.

(d) All of the Georges River bushland alongside the eastern side of the Campbelltown LGA needs to be protected. The old plans for the “proposed Georges River Parkway need to be scrapped because it is simply providing an easternmost point for developers to destroy bushland up to! And it should never be developed into a major roadway because it will cut through so much Koala habitat – Prof R. Close who researched the Campbelltown koalas for many years told me some years ago that this road alone would mark the end of our Koala colony.

Plans to build a bike track right through this pristine bushland from Wedderburn to Glenfield using a State Government grant should also be scrapped. Bushwalkers and speeding mountain bikes would not be the only ones to utilise such a track; the unregistered dirt bikes that churn up new tracks through our bushland every week will utilise such a track to traverse from one end of our LGA to the other and because this bushland is home to Koalas, and many other amazing and shy species of wildlife including lyrebirds, wombats and echidnas, I ask the NSW government to protect this land by placing it into the hands of National Parks so that proper tracks for nature lovers can be enhanced and/or built and managed properly. The Dharawal National Park in Wedderburn is just a tiny example of how well our bushlands can be opened to the public in a way that encourages respect for it. All land south of St Helens Park/ alongside

the eastern side of Appin Road within the Campbelltown LGA needs to be bought up by the Government and protected as a National Park.

One other key area of koala habitat that needs to be purchased/protected by the State Government is the bushland behind St Helens Park Public School, currently owned by a local property developer and which made up entirely of pristine Core Koala Habitat.

The Koalas of Campbelltown are often seen in large numbers close to urban areas probably due to the water run-off from roads and creeks which helps their favourite trees to become even more irresistible. Climate change will help push koalas increasingly towards areas of human habitation and therefore more into the path of vehicles and dogs, so along major roads that are already crossed by known wildlife corridors (eg. Appin Rd between Campbelltown and Appin, Heathcote Road) we are needing expensive wildlife exclusion fencing and proper wildlife overpasses and/or underpasses. And similar wildlife protections may be required along other roads which will most likely become major roads in the future due to expected housing development such the Leumeah end of Hansens Road.

(e) If this significant bushland area of Campbelltown was to be preserved and protected the effect would be profound. Locals could shift their focus from activism to nurturing the environment and wildlife. The environmental impacts of this are easy to predict because a beautiful and valued bushland is also desirable to tourists – the possibility of tourists travelling by train for approximately 45 minutes from Sydney Airport to see Koalas in the wild is amazing. The social and economic impacts from Campbelltown finally putting in place its dream of a Koala hospital and rehabilitation area would mean that our injured koalas would not have to risk contamination from being in close proximity to koalas from other areas at vet clinics, and people would willingly pay to see a koala which could help fund the continuation of such a facility and vet costs. And by dedicating so much land to National Parks it would ensure that the Georges River Parkway is never built, that the Koalas and other wildlife of the Georges River are truly protected.

(f) Land needs to be set aside along the western side of Appin Road between Campbelltown and Appin – land that currently contains a major wildlife corridor linking the Nepean River and the Georges River - so that a proper wildlife crossing can be installed to link this area (it would be helpful if both parcels of land could be under National Parks control to ensure proper management) and wildlife fencing could funnel koalas and other wildlife to this crossing thereby removing risk of further road kill along Appin Road, whilst still enabling koalas to seek out mates in surrounding areas (thereby ensuring necessary genetic diversity).

Plus, we need to implement consistent state-wide road warnings for wildlife - Campbelltown Council has been proactive in erecting Koala Crossing signs (with phone number of wildlife rescue groups), and signage in bushwalking areas to warn that dogs must be kept on a leash. However, vehicles often speed along the main roads that are roadkill hotspots, and I often see people still walking dogs through and near bushland without a leash. Many public comments in

relation to the question of how to minimise wildlife deaths include the suggestion to lower the speed limit, I believe this could be helpful in some sections of road but there was a tragic koala death on Appin Road at Appin in recent times, in a slow speed limit area, with a roundabout near, and street lighting, so multiple measures are needed, including signs showing the number of koala deaths along a particular road plus even the painting of a special criss-cross pattern (eg. in red and white) on roads to clearly mark on and around wildlife hotspots so that drivers are alerted in every possible way.

And lastly, we need a clear commitment from State Government, because it is approving the developments that can foreseeably destroy our local Koala population, to put considerable funding towards wildlife exclusion fencing and wildlife underpasses and overpasses along major roads such as Appin Road between Campbelltown and Appin., and to commit local councils to partially fund such wildlife infrastructure. The Koala is an Australian icon which is loved the world over and Federal funding should be committed as well to ensure we are doing all we can as a country to protect and preserve our wildlife. Whilst I believe the funding for wildlife infrastructure should be coming from all levels of government, we should not leave out an extra developer levy to go towards such infrastructure.

If there is anything you would like more information or detail on, or screen shots of maps that illustrate the areas I describe, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Due to privacy reasons I ask that my name and contact details be kindly removed from published versions of this submission.