

New expert advice on koala corridors

Across NSW, koala numbers are in decline. Koalas are listed as ‘endangered’ under federal biodiversity legislation and ‘vulnerable’ under NSW biodiversity legislation.

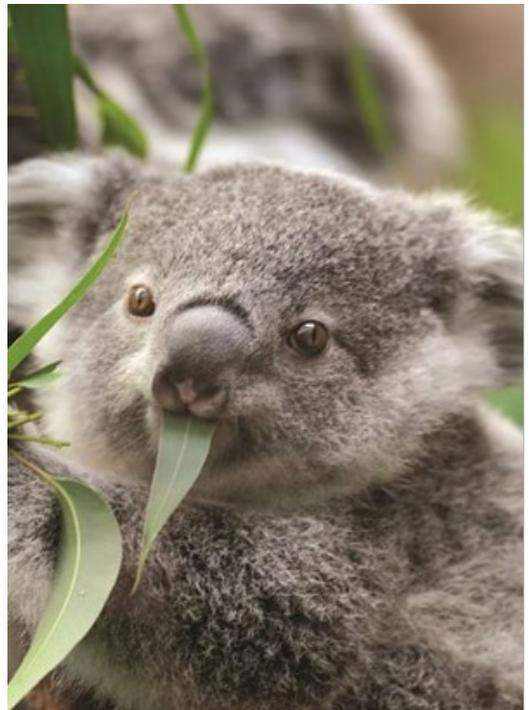
One of the largest and healthiest koala populations in metropolitan Sydney can be found in the south west edge of the city. The Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan (the CPCP) will include a range of actions to protect this important koala population, including establishing new reserves, installing exclusion fencing around urban areas and roads, and restoring and regenerating habitat.

New scientific advice

The NSW Government is supporting the protection and growth of the south-western Sydney koala population by adopting new expert advice as part of the CPCP. In May 2021, the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer provided expert advice on the adequacy of the draft CPCP koala protection measures in the Wilton and Greater Macarthur Growth Areas. The advice details 31 principles for protecting koalas in the area covered by the CPCP and surrounding areas.

The department has prepared a response to the new koala advice outlining how we have considered and adopted all 31 recommendations to finalise the CPCP. We updated our mapping to protect additional areas of koala habitat and ensure that koala corridors assist koala movement. Further information on how this advice has been addressed in the CPCP is provided in our *Response to advice from the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer 2021* published on the department’s website in December 2021.

Although the CPCP does not include the Gilead Stage 2 site, the department has consistently applied all the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer’s advice to the two east - west koala corridors for the Gilead Precinct of the Greater Macarthur Growth Area. The advice will guide precinct planning decisions, including the biodiversity certification application for Gilead Stage 2.



Wider koala corridors

Koalas require large and connected areas of habitat to eat, move, and breed. Corridors provide koalas with safe passage across the landscape, and fencing keeps them away from threats such as human activity and dogs. Corridors also provide escape routes from natural threats like fire.

Corridors can also be revegetated to be habitats, to support a healthy koala population in fragmented landscape and improve resilience to long term threats including climate change.

The Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer recommended:

- koala corridors in the CPCP Area be expanded to an **average minimum width of 390-425 metres**, including a buffer within the corridor. Buffers reduce the direct and indirect impacts from humans, such as noise and light.
- buffers within the koala corridors be at least 30 metres wide if a koala exclusion fence is installed between the urban area and the habitat corridor. The buffer should be 60 metres wide if a koala exclusion fence is not able to be installed.
- koala corridors and habitat need to be separate from bushfire Asset Protection Zones (APZs). APZs are to be located in *certified-urban capable land*, with all of the APZ on the urban side of any koala exclusion fence.

What this means for landholders

Under the CPCP, land is classified into different categories (see definitions below). The land category mapping in the Wilton and Greater Macarthur growth areas has been updated to align with the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer advice on the average minimum width of koala corridors.

Future precinct plans in the Wilton and Greater Macarthur growth areas will use the updated koala corridor mapping and the CPCP land category mapping. The proposed expansion of koala corridors will not affect private land that has already been zoned for urban development.

Land category definitions

Certified-urban capable land is where future development is likely to occur. The CPCP provides biodiversity approvals for around 11,000 hectares of this land. The widening of some koala corridors has resulted in some reductions to the area of *certified-urban capable land* in Wilton and Greater Macarthur growth areas.

Avoided land has important biodiversity values. The final CPCP increases *avoided land* on some properties in Wilton and Greater Macarthur growth areas to ensure the average minimum width of koala corridors meets the OSCE advice. While planning controls are now in place for avoided land that protect biodiversity, zoning has not been changed by the CPCP and development may still occur via an appropriate planning pathway.

Planning controls to protect koalas in avoided land

Properties with avoided land have important biodiversity values, such as koala habitat. While we are no longer proposing to apply E2 Environmental Conservation zoning (now termed C2 Environmental Conservation), planning controls to protect koalas in avoided land are now in place.

Development may proceed if vegetation is not cleared, or if a consent authority has considered the

impacts of the development on habitat connectivity and fauna movement including koala corridors as well as other impacts of the development on threatened plants and animals.

For factsheets and frequently asked questions on planning controls, protecting koalas and other changes that we have made to the CPCP including to changes to riparian and vegetation mapping, please see the [department's website](#).

For further information about the CPCP, you can contact a member of the team by emailing cpcp@planning.nsw.gov.au or calling 02 9585 6060 between 9:30am and 4:30pm weekdays.