



August 2020

The conservation program



The Plan's conservation program will protect biodiversity and threatened ecological communities and provide an enduring conservation legacy for the people of Western Sydney.

The [Draft Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan](#) (the Plan) has been prepared as part of the environmental approvals for future development in four nominated areas and major transport corridors in Western Sydney. The nominated areas are Wilton Growth Area, Greater Macarthur Growth Area, Western Sydney Aerotropolis, and Greater Penrith to Eastern Creek Investigation Area.

The Plan's vision is to 'support Western Sydney's biodiversity and growth'. It will establish long-term certainty for biodiversity conservation and development in Western Sydney. The Plan's conservation program comprises a range of commitments to avoid, mitigate and offset the impacts of development on biodiversity values and other matters protected under Commonwealth and NSW biodiversity legislation.

New conservation lands established under the Plan will meet the offset requirements of the NSW *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Conservation lands

At least 90% of funding for the conservation program will be to establish and manage new conservation lands.

Two types of conservation land will be established as protected sites under the Plan.

Reserves (including additions to existing reserves) will comprise more than half of the new conservation lands established. Land will be managed as part of the national parks estate by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, or as local reserves managed by councils, Aboriginal organisations, or the community.

Biodiversity stewardship sites may be established on private or public land. They are an effective way of preserving biodiversity where land ownership is fragmented. When a landholder establishes a stewardship site they enter into a cooperative agreement with the NSW Government to manage the land for conservation. Through this agreement the landholder can receive an economic benefit for the biodiversity on their land.

Ecological restoration will occur on reserves and stewardship sites to enhance the existing vegetation communities. Up to 25% of the Plan's conservation target may be achieved by restoring ecological communities.

How we identified potential conservation land

Around 28,300 hectares of land has been identified as potential conservation lands. These lands, known as the Plan's strategic conservation area, were identified through a peer reviewed four-stage method:

1. Ecological assessment to identify the areas of highest biodiversity value
2. Constraints assessment to identify limitations to conservation
3. Identification of conservation priorities to determine areas suitable for offsets
4. Ground-truthing to confirm the biodiversity values of each area of proposed conservation land. This will be ongoing as new conservation lands are established.

The strategic conservation area represents the area of greatest strategic value to deliver long-term conservation outcomes in the Cumberland subregion, and which has the vegetation communities needed to offset biodiversity impacts.

Vegetation offset targets

The conservation program aims to protect at least 5,475 hectares of native vegetation to address impacts to threatened ecological communities and species (see Table 1). Up to 11,000 hectares of land, including non-target vegetation communities, is likely to be needed to achieve this target.

Species offset targets

Species-specific offset targets were developed for 15 species likely to be at risk of residual adverse risks from development (see Table 2).

Table 1. Vegetation community offset targets

Threatened ecological community	Impact (ha)	Offset (ha)
Shale Gravel Transition Forest	52.2	150
Cooks River/ Castlereagh Ironbark Forest	36.9	110
Freshwater Wetlands	2.1	5
Moist Shale Woodland	0.1	0.2
River-Flat Eucalypt Forest	165.1	450
Cumberland Plain Woodland	1,014.6	3170
Shale Sandstone Transition Forest	487.7	1,540
Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest	19.2	50
TOTAL	1,777.8	5,475

Table 2. Species offset targets

Species	Offset
<i>Cynanchum elegans</i>	2 offset locations
<i>Dillwynia tenuifolia</i>	3 offset locations
<i>Epacris purpurascens</i> var. <i>purpurascens</i>	1 offset location
<i>Grevillea juniperina</i> subsp. <i>juniperina</i>	3 offset locations
<i>Hibbertia fumana</i>	1 offset location
<i>Hibbertia puberula</i>	1 offset location
<i>Marsdenia viridiflora</i> subsp. <i>viridiflora</i>	1 offset location
<i>Persoonia nutans</i>	2 offset locations
<i>Pimelea spicata</i>	3 offset locations
<i>Pultenaea parviflora</i>	2 offset locations
<i>Pultenaea pedunculata</i>	1 offset location
Cumberland Plain Land Snail	3 offset locations
Southern Myotis	2 offset locations
Swift Parrot	4,470 ha potential foraging habitat
Koala	610 ha important habitat

For 13 of these species, the conservation program commits to protecting a specified number of offset locations. An 'offset location' is a site where one or more populations and habitat of the species has been confirmed through surveys or an expert report as being present. Offset locations may be located in reserves or biodiversity stewardship sites.

For two species, the Swift Parrot and the Koala, the conservation program commits to protecting a target area of habitat.

Protecting MNES

Impacts on Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) must be considered as part of biodiversity approvals under the EPBC Act. Some of the MNES that will be protected through the Plan include:

- Shale Sandstone Transition Forest
- Cumberland Plain Shale Woodlands and Shale-Gravel Transition Forest
- Coastal Floodplain Eucalypt Forest of Eastern Australia (subject to listing)
- Cooks River Castlereagh Ironbark Forest
- Plants – *Persoonia nutans*, *Pimelea spicata* and *Pultenaea parviflora*
- Animals – Koala, Green and Golden Bell Frog, Swift Parrot, Regent Honeyeater, Grey-headed Flying-fox.

The Plan's strategic conservation area contains suitable land to offset all residual impacts to nationally threatened ecological communities and species as determined by the [Cumberland Plain Assessment Report](#).

New reserves

Over the next five years the NSW Government will begin the process of establishing three new reserves in Western Sydney. These reserves are critical to protecting threatened ecological communities and species, and contributing to a strategic, upfront biodiversity offset for the Plan.

Georges River Koala Reserve will secure up to 1,885 hectares of koala habitat along the Georges River to facilitate movement of koalas between Campbelltown and the Southern Highlands.

An extension to Gulguer Reserve in the Warragamba area could protect 1,770 hectares of threatened ecological communities including Shale Sandstone Transition Forest and Cumberland Plain Woodland, and provide connections to adjacent reserves.

The Confluence is a reserve being investigated in the Hawkesbury region. It would provide the opportunity to restore Cumberland Plain Woodland and River-Flat Eucalypt Forest communities while providing a connection between Wianamatta (South Creek) and existing nature reserves.

Other conservation actions

The conservation program includes a range of commitments and actions to support the biodiversity outcomes of the Plan. These include protecting koala habitat and koala welfare; mitigating threats from pest animals, weeds, fire and climate change; increasing knowledge of threatened species and climate change adaptation through research; and raising awareness through community education and engagement activities.

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