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Protecting koalas on the Cumberland Plain



The Draft Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan proposes commitments and actions to support the protection of the Southern Sydney koala population and will invest in implementing the NSW Koala Strategy.

Koalas in NSW and South Western Sydney

Koala numbers are in decline in NSW. In Sydney they are found on the south eastern edge of the Cumberland Plain. The Southern Sydney koala population is the largest population in the Sydney metropolitan area. It is one of the healthiest populations in NSW and one of the few that is continuing to grow.

Key threats

Koalas in South Western Sydney live in a landscape of native bushland on the borders of urban areas and rural farmlands. Important koala habitat in this area is connected by key movement corridors.

The proximity to urban areas and the presence of roads intersecting some areas of koala habitat currently exposes koalas to key threats, including vehicle strike on local and major roads, drowning in swimming pools, and domestic dog attack. These threats will increase with the future development in the area if mitigation measures are not implemented. Koalas are also threatened by climate change and disease.

A commitment to conserve koalas and their habitat

The [Draft Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan](#) (the Plan) includes a koala conservation program that is designed to avoid, minimise and offset potential impacts on koalas in South Western Sydney. The program addresses residual impacts that may occur from planned development in Wilton and Greater Macarthur growth areas and supports other koala initiatives such as the [NSW Koala Strategy](#).

Protecting koala corridors

Koalas require large, connected areas of habitat to eat, move and breed. The Plan will protect koala habitat by adding to existing reserves and establishing new public reserves and biodiversity stewardship sites.

The Plan will also facilitate koala movement across the landscape by protecting and restoring at least one east–west corridor. These east–west corridors connect high quality habitat along the Georges and Nepean rivers and are important for the longterm survival of the koala population.

The Georges River Koala Reserve

The Plan will establish the Georges River Koala Reserve to protect the important north–south koala movement corridor along the Georges River between Appin and Kentlyn.

In November 2018 the NSW Government announced that 800 hectares of publicly owned land will be set aside as part of the reserve. The Draft Greater Macarthur 2040 Plan identified there will be no further development east of Appin Road, to protect koalas and support implementation of the proposed reserve.

Future additions to the reserve will result in the protection of up to 1,885 hectares of koala habitat (including up to 200 hectares of land that will be restored).

Restoring koala habitat

Ecological restoration projects are an important part of the actions proposed to enhance the connectivity between patches of koala habitat to strengthen existing corridors.

In the first five years of delivering the conservation program, the NSW Government will plant 100,000 trees to restore important koala habitat in the Georges River Koala Reserve, along Ousedale Creek, around Appin and in other priority locations in the strategic conservation area.

Mitigating threats to koalas

As well as protecting habitat, the Plan will manage threats to koalas associated with urbanisation such as dog attacks, vehicle strikes and drowning in swimming pools. Around 120 km of koala exclusion fencing will be installed between important koala habitat and urban areas to separate koalas from threats in urban areas. Exclusion fencing will also be installed on both sides of Appin Road between Mount Gilead and Appin Village.

Where fencing is not possible, controls will be developed according to the Koala Habitat Protection Guideline made under the [Koala Habitat Protection SEPP 2019](#). These controls will apply to land 60 metres from important koala habitat, and design requirements included in the relevant development control plans.

Building capacity and supporting stakeholders

A targeted stakeholder and community engagement program is proposed to raise awareness of the Southern Sydney koala population, and provide opportunities for local residents to participate in koala conservation.

Filling in knowledge gaps and monitoring koala populations will assist with long-term management of koalas in South Western Sydney. The Plan will invest funds in the *NSW Koala Strategy* to support research priorities identified in the *NSW Koala Strategy Research Plan*, including identifying key threats, innovative mitigation measures, demographics, life history and the ecology of the Southern Sydney koala population.

There is a known shortage of wildlife carers and veterinarians with the skills to rehabilitate sick and injured koalas in Western Sydney. Through the *NSW Koala Strategy* the Plan will invest in training and technical resources needed by wildlife carers and veterinarians in line with the *NSW Volunteer Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy*.

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