

Protecting koalas on the Cumberland Plain

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

Koalas in south-western Sydney

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

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 being hit by cars on local and major roads, drowning in swimming pools, and domestic dog attacks. Without mitigation measures, these threats will increase as new urban areas are developed. Climate change and disease also threaten koalas.

A commitment to conserve koalas and their habitat

The Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan (the CPCP) includes a koala conservation program that is designed to avoid, mitigate, minimise and offset potential impacts on koalas in south-western Sydney. An outcome of the CPCP is that the “condition of protected koala habitat is improved, connectivity between koala sub-populations is maintained, threats to koalas are managed and the koala population in South Western Sydney persists and thrives”.

The koala conservation program includes 8 commitments that are outlined in Sub-Plan B of the CPCP. The program is designed to address residual impacts that may occur from planned development in the Wilton and Greater Macarthur growth areas, and will support other koala initiatives, such as the NSW Koala Strategy.

New expert scientific advice

In May 2021, the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer (OSCE) provided expert advice on the adequacy of the draft Plan’s koala protection measures. The advice details 31 principles for protecting koalas. The department has adopted all 31 recommendations to finalise the CPCP. For more information about our response to the recommendations and the method we used to apply the OSCE advice, please refer to the reports on the [department’s website](#).

The Georges River Koala Reserve

Koalas require large, connected areas of habitat to eat, move and breed. The CPCP will conserve koala habitat through the protection of habitat corridors and the establishment of the Georges River Koala Reserve. The reserve boundaries include the important north–south koala movement corridor along the Georges River between Appin and Long Point. The reserve will protect and manage koala habitat while continuing to provide local communities with access to public space for low-impact recreation.

The CPCP’s offset target for koalas (based on the impact that will occur) is 705 hectares of koala habitat. The establishment of the Georges River Koala Reserve will eventually protect more than twice this amount, with an expected total area of up to 1,830 hectares.

54 hectares of land has already been transferred to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service for the Georges River Koala Reserve.

To improve habitat and focus on long-term outcomes we will focus on restoring up to 80 hectares of government-owned land in the Georges River Koala Reserve in the first 5 years of the plan.



Protecting koala corridors and movement

The CPCP will facilitate koala movement across the landscape by protecting other key movement corridors in the Wilton and Greater Macarthur growth areas. The Nepean River is a primary north-south koala corridor in the CPCP Area. The CPCP has mapped all habitat along the Nepean River within the Wilton and Greater Macarthur growth areas as avoided land (not certified for urban development). The Ousedale Creek koala corridor runs east to west and will connect high quality habitat along the Georges and Nepean rivers, and is important for the survival of the koala population. Following the OSCE advice, our mapping was updated to protect additional areas of koala habitat and ensure that koala corridors are functional for koala movement.

Although the CPCP does not include the Gilead Stage 2 site, the Department has consistently applied the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer’s advice in finalising the CPCP and to investigate the two east -west koala corridors for the Gilead Precinct (Menangle Creek and Woodhouse Creek). The Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer’s advice will guide precinct planning decisions, including bio certification applications for Gilead Stage 2.

The Koala habitat in south-western Sydney is highly fragmented. Ecological restoration, which helps degraded and damaged ecosystems return to a more natural state, will help to improve connectivity and expand the total area of koala habitat in the area.

We are working with Transport for NSW to provide safe crossings for koalas and other fauna across Appin Road. An underpass is being designed for Ousedale Creek corridor and we are augmenting Kings Falls Bridge at Appin Road to allow safe, dry passage for koalas under the bridge.

Koala exclusion fencing

The CPCP commits to koala exclusion fencing in the Wilton and Greater Macarthur growth areas to prevent koalas from moving into the new urban areas where they are exposed to threats such as vehicle strikes, dog attacks and drowning in swimming pools.

Fencing will protect east-west connectivity between the Georges River and the Nepean River provided by the Ousedale Creek corridor. Fencing will also be installed along sections of Appin Road where it passes through koala habitat, and where the two fauna crossings will be constructed.

Building capacity and supporting stakeholders

A targeted stakeholder and community engagement program will raise awareness about the presence of koalas and the threats they face. It will also provide opportunities for local communities to participate in koala conservation and management.

Research and monitoring

Filling in knowledge gaps and monitoring koala populations will assist with long-term support of koalas in south-western Sydney. The CPCP will invest funds in the *NSW Koala Strategy* to support research and monitoring priorities as well as contribute training and technical resources needed by wildlife carers and veterinarians.

Funded through the CPCP and the *NSW Koala Strategy*, a chlamydia vaccine trial has commenced in south western Sydney, led by the University of Sydney, as well as the purchase of a rapid Chlamydia testing machine so we can give koalas coming into care the all-clear more quickly.

For factsheets and frequently asked questions on new expert koala advice and other changes we have made to the CPCP, 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.

