



PROTECTION OF OUR UNIQUE, DISEASE-FREE KOALA COMMUNITY

BRIEFING PAPER



State and Federal Issues Briefing Paper

Title: Protection of our unique Disease free Koala Community

Date: July 2018

Key issues (*What problem/issue needs to be resolved?*)

- The largest disease free koala population in NSW is not currently protected by an Integrated Regional Koala Conservation Plan that conserves habitat corridors across the region. In the absence of these protective measures this Koala population will be adversely effected.
- The rezoning of Wilton South East will bisect the regionally significant Allens Creek koala habitat corridor and ignores the advice of the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) and independent consultants.
- The area was rezoned before the koala habitat corridor survey and mapping work had been completed by OEH and the biocertification of the Wilton and Greater Macarthur Growth Areas had been completed by the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE).
- The New South Wales Koala Strategy needs to be amended to recognise the state and national significance of this koala population.
- The review of the State Environmental Planning Policy 44 – Koala Habitat Protection needs to be finalised and to adopt the amended koala food tree species list used in the certification and mapping of koala habitat corridors.

Action sought	Timeframe
<p>Agree to oppose the current rezoning decision of South East Wilton until it protects this crucial koala population's habitat.</p> <p>To work collaboratively with the State and Community stakeholders to create an integrated framework for the protection of koalas.</p> <p>Preservation of local and regional corridors</p>	<p>August 2018</p> <p>Representation to State Parliament</p>

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)

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The Briefing note:

The South Western Sydney Koala population is estimated to exceed 700 individuals throughout the eastern portion of the Wollondilly Shire and throughout Campbelltown.

Research and survey work carried out by Professor Rob Close, University of Western Sydney, and the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) for the Wollondilly Koala Conservation Plan (WKCP) has confirmed this is the largest disease free population in NSW that is expanding with numerous breeding females being identified throughout the corridors.

Eighteen months of survey work for the WKCP has confirmed that the Allen's Creek corridor at Wilton is a primary habitat for breeding and is a critical movement corridor for koalas between the continuous Southern Highlands, Wollondilly and Campbelltown populations. Koalas have been recorded within the Allens Creek corridor since 1991.

Wollondilly Shire Council is very concerned that the recently rezoned South East Precinct at Wilton New Town by the NSW Government bisects the Allen's Creek corridor and completely ignores recommendations made by independent experts and the work carried out by OEH for the WKCP to protect this vital koala habitat.

Council believes that the recent rezoning by Department of Planning and Environment of the South East Precinct at Wilton is premature and will likely result in substantial adverse impacts to the local koala population, as well as the movement of this species within the Greater Macarthur Area. These corridors would also facilitate the connectivity of a large number of native species, many of which are endangered and vulnerable (over 520 fauna species).

In addition to this, Council has previously raised concerns that little consideration has been given to the protection of koala habitats from the impacts of development associated with the overall Wilton New Town proposal.

The NSW State government has produced the NSW Koala Strategy which has not identified this population of koalas for protection and therefore compromising long term protection strategies that could be implemented through land use planning frameworks.

Given that the rezoning of the Wilton South East Precinct has already occurred and the intention of the NSW Department of Planning & Environment to proceed with the rezoning of other large land precincts within the Wilton and Greater Macarthur Priority Growth Areas, Council believe it is imperative that a South Western Sydney Integrated Regional Koala Conservation Plan is prepared and adopted before any further progress of the growth areas occurs.

Purpose of briefing

The purpose of the briefing is to inform the Government and Community that Council has concerns over the lack of protection of the Koala Corridor both through landscape and over major arterial roads and road corridors.

Executive Summary

- The Council does not support the rezoning at Wilton South East that bisects the Allens Creek Koala habitat corridor.

The recommendations are:

- That the southern portion of the Allens Creek Koala habitat corridor be protected and restored between the north western and south eastern culverts of Allens Creek that flow under Picton Road, providing a koala corridor linkage to the Upper Nepean State Conservation Area.
- That the NSW government defer any further release of land within the Greater Macarthur Growth Area and the Wilton Priority Growth Area until a South Western Sydney Integrated Regional Koala Conservation Plan is finalised.
- That the State Environmental Planning Policy 44 – Koala Habitat Protection review be finalised including the adoption of the updated koala food tree species list to be used in determining core koala habitat corridors.

Overview of the issue

- The Department of Planning and Environment rezoned Wilton South East that will effectively bisect the Allens Creek Koala Habitat corridor, ignoring advice from the Office of Environment and Heritage.
- The Department of Planning and Environment rezoned the south west precinct without considering new research that has demonstrated that the rezoning in particular is an important core habitat Koala Corridor. This rezoning has also highlighted that at a regional level there is no South Western Sydney Integrated Regional Koala Conservation Plan covering the Wilton and Greater Macarthur Growth Areas and surrounds. Council has been successful in obtaining over 13,000 signatures from the community in support

of the #saveourkoalas campaign seeking to have the issue debated in the NSW parliament.

- If the rezoning progresses as is currently proposed it will bisect the regionally significant Allens Creek koala habitat corridor linking the Nepean River to the Nepean Conservation Area. Breeding koalas have been recorded using the corridor since 1991. This will have an impact on the Koala corridor and there is a proposal to upgrade Picton road to a 6 lane highway with no overpasses for fauna proposed as the State is ignoring the significance of the corridor and therefore has no wildlife protection proposals in place for this area.
- The koala is an iconic species and the first reported European sighting of a koala was in the Wollondilly Shire in 1798. The koalas of Wilton and Appin through to Campbelltown are the largest disease free koala population in NSW and hence have state and national significance. The corridor exists between 6 Local Government area of Liverpool, Campbelltown, Wollondilly, Wingecarribee, Sutherland and Wollongong.
- The southern portion of the Allens Creek corridor was identified as a primary koala corridor in 2007 as part of the “Threatened and Pest Animals of Greater Southern Sydney” report published by the Department of Environment and Climate Change. This has been confirmed by recent survey work undertaken by the Office of Environment and Heritage for the WKCP. The reports prepared and supplied for the rezoning do not consider the new data and have not comprehensively addressed or acknowledged the habitat or corridors.
- For the last 18 months the Office of Environment Heritage have been undertaking field work and monitoring of Koalas under the Saving Our Species program, surveying both koalas and their habitat. This work has confirmed the presence of breeding koalas within and around the Allens Creek Corridor.
- By not acknowledging the presence of the breeding koala population will compromise the long term expansion and connectivity of this species in the landscape. There are only 2 culverts linking the koala corridor from north to south under Picton Road that are suitable for safe koala crossings and the Wilton South East rezoning will effectively cut one of those linkages.

What are the risks or ramifications of not resolving the issue?

- Development will proceed without adequate consideration of the Koalas and their habitat. The result is that Koalas may become isolated and restricted from moving through the corridor.

What references exist to inform this issue:

- Peer Review – Koala Survey, Wilton prepared by HWR Ecological PTY LTD, prepared by Professor Robert Close, November 2005.
- Threatened and pest animals of Greater Southern Sydney report, Department of Environment and Climate Change, September 2007.
- Conserving koalas in Wollondilly and Campbelltown LGA's report, the Office of Environment and Heritage, September 2017.

Council Resolutions

Wollondilly Shire Council is extremely committed to the protection of our unique koala populations and their habitat which is reflected in the resolution at the Extraordinary Meeting of Council held on 30 April 2018.

The NSW Government defer any further release of land within the Greater Macarthur Growth Area and Wilton Priority Growth Area until the NSW Government prepares and finalises a South Western Sydney Koala Conservation Strategy that protects koalas and their habitat corridors throughout the region. The Conservation Strategy should:

- I. Be underpinned by an approved and integrated Comprehensive Koala Plans of Management for Wollondilly, Campbelltown, Liverpool, Wingecarribee and Wollongong Local Government Areas in accordance with Schedule 1 and Part 3 of the State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) 44 - Koala Habitat Protection.*
- II. Include Koala habitat and corridors with reference to the updated Koala food tree species list that has been provided by OEH for the current review of SEPP 44 and we request that the review of SEPP 44 be finalised.*

And further council requests:

The rezoning of that portion of the Wilton South East Precinct that forms part of the Allen's Creek Primary Koala habitat corridor be repealed by the Minister of Planning.

That the draft petition to the Speaker and Members of the NSW Legislative Assembly seeking that Parliament debate the repeal of the rezoning of the South East Precinct as tabled at the Extra Ordinary Meeting, be endorsed by Council for circulation immediately following the meeting. That upon 10,000 signatures being received, Council formally requests that Jai Rowell MP, Member for Wollondilly, presents the petition to the NSW Legislative Assembly.

Further that this petition be incorporated into a Koala habitat preservation campaign as part of the "A GREAT New Town or NO town at all" campaign. This petition should also be sent to

LGA's and community groups that neighbour the last disease free Sydney Koala habitat requesting support for the petition.

Following are Council Resolutions in relation to this topic:

36/2017; 14/2017; 105/2018; 81/2018; 55/2018; 85/2018;

Cr Strategic Planning Day 20/03/2018

Community views on the issue (CSP)

- The community is concerned that the rezoning has gone ahead without transport and koala corridors being resolved.
- Currently over 13,000 signatures have been received from the community supporting councils #saveourkoalas petition which has been tabled in the NSW state parliament.
- The community cannot understand why the broader planning issues such as koala/wildlife corridors and transport (M9) and public transport have not been improved or resolved and further residential rezoning's are occurring.

Lobbyist's/Submitters' views on the proposal

- Wilton Action Group and the community oppose the development.
- Developers support the proposal.

State Government view on the issue

- Department of Planning and Environment believe that the issues have been addressed.
- Council believes that the rezoning is premature and has not considered transport, wildlife corridors namely the impact on koala population.
- The Department of Planning and Environment claims that they have resolved the issues. Council claims that there has been no final documents prepared prior to the rezoning and Council and that the works and planning mechanisms are not adequate and not enough has been done to date.

Actions

Council resolved to write to the State and Federal Ministers to alert them to the issues.

To table a petition at the NSW Legislative Assembly to highlight the issues raised by the Community and Council.

To undertake a Koala Summit and raise awareness of the issue.

To collaboratively work with both Local Government, State Government and community stakeholders to create an integrated framework for the protection for koalas.