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Environment
Centre**
for the future

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The Hon. Anthony Roberts, MP
NSW Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing and Special Minister of State
PO Box 5341
Sydney NSW 2001

30 August 2017

cc. NSW Premier, NSW Minister for the Environment, General Manager Campbelltown Council, Chief Commissioner Greater Sydney Commission

Dear Minister,

CAMPBELLTOWN KOALAS – PUBLIC STATEMENT

The Campbelltown area in south-western Sydney contains the only population of koalas listed in NSW by McAlpine et. al. (2015) as likely to be growing¹. While koalas found further south in the Wollondilly and Wingecarribee Local Government Areas may also be expanding, those populations are affected by chlamydia. This makes it vital that the chlamydia-free Campbelltown koalas survive as a reservoir of healthy animals from which to regenerate declining populations.

From a scientific, ecological and community perspective, the koalas of Campbelltown are priceless. Few, if any, other major urban areas on earth can claim to support a species as globally recognised and valued as the koala. However, their long-term survival is being directly threatened by the level and speed of urbanisation projected for the Campbelltown and Greater Macarthur area.

In addition to major housing growth over the last few years, the Greater Sydney Commission has set a target of an additional 143,000 dwellings in the next 20 years to be built in south-western Sydney². The NSW Government's proposed Greater Macarthur Priority Growth Area will deliver 33,000 of these³, on land that includes important koala corridors.

Already, major planning and development decisions are being proposed. For example, in early 2017, Campbelltown Council voted to submit a rezoning application for the heritage-listed dairy farm property known as Mt Gilead, west of Appin Rd. Mt Gilead contains important koala corridors between the Georges and Nepean Rivers. The Department of Planning and Environment is currently considering whether or not to approve Council's rezoning proposal.

Alarmingly, this type of decision is being made in the absence of a finalised Government strategy to protect the Campbelltown Koala population from the impacts of projected urbanisation and to enhance existing koala corridors. Equally concerning is the absence of a legally-required, satisfactory Koala Plan of Management relevant to the Campbelltown Local Government Area.

¹ McAlpine et. al. 2015. Conserving koalas: A review of the contrasting regional trends, outlooks and policy challenges. Biological Conservation 192 226-236.

² <https://www.greater.sydney/digital-district-plan/992>

³ <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Plans-for-your-area/Priority-Growth-Areas-and-Precincts/Greater-Macarthur-Priority-Growth-Area>

On this basis, we, the undersigned, urge Campbelltown City Council and the NSW Government to delay any major rezoning and development decisions in the Greater Macarthur area until a satisfactory and evidenced-based Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management has been prepared, exhibited, adopted and operationalised. We, the undersigned, also urge the NSW Government to apply conservation tenures to all public lands identified as containing koala habitat and/or a koala population, and refrain from using an offsets approach on these lands.

We, the undersigned, further note that:

- The NSW Government classifies koalas as an 'Iconic Species' in its Saving Our Species Strategy, and states that "iconic species are important socially, culturally and economically, and the community expects them to be effectively managed and protected".
- The NSW Government has not finalised its whole-of-government Koala Strategy, including its review of State Environmental Planning Policy No.44 – Koala Habitat protection.⁴
- Campbelltown Council's SEPP 44 Koala Management Plan has not been finalised and does not comply with current SEPP 44 requirements.
- The biodiversity strategy under the Greater Macarthur Corridor Strategy has not been finalised.
- The koala is listed as a vulnerable species under both NSW and federal legislation, and neither jurisdiction has a current Recovery Plan.

Yours sincerely,

Jeff Angel
Executive Director



This Statement is endorsed by:

⁴ <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/animals/nsw-koala-strategy.htm>

Georges River
Environmental Alliance



Associate Professor Robert
Close

Blue Mountains
Conservation Society



Friends of the Koala



Koala Hospital,
Port Macquarie



National Parks Association
of NSW



National Parks Association
of NSW (Macarthur Branch)



Nature Conservation
Council of NSW



NSW Wildlife Information
Rescue & Education Service



Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife
Services