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Submission regarding Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Save the Koala) Bill 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this inquiry.

The National Parks Association of NSW is one of the state's peak environment groups and was established in 1957. NPA Macarthur Branch is the region's oldest established environment group, operating as a sub-branch of the Sydney Branch since 1975 and as a full branch since 1987.

The power to introduce a moratorium on the clearing of koala habitat has been needed for a very long time and we welcome this amendment to this bill 2032. The easy development of land that has existed in Australia needs to come to an end if we are to keep the integrity of our bushland and the creatures that live there. This bill to put a moratorium on the clearing of koala habitat is significant because every 25ha removed represents the loss of a female koala home range.

This move is a mirror of what happened in England in 1955 to stop the growth of large built-up areas from merging and which is still in place today. It is not in anyone's best interests to keep the urban sprawl creeping forward, engulfing all that it comes upon. Has it stopped development in London where the green ban was placed? On 23 Nov 2021 London was home to over nine million people, and now Sydney is home to 5.4 million people. London has concentrated its population making public transport quicker and easier to use, as people aren't so car-dependent, but here in Sydney, we are still sprawling across the countryside as if there was an endless supply of land. The result is we lose wildlife corridors, farmland, air quality and water supply are also put under strain. We therefore must learn to stop the urban sprawl and instead build liveable high rise that includes parks and quiet places within the city boundaries.

The Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan (CPCP) FINAL has been released to the public and is now awaiting Federal Government approval. This Plan involves and will include clearing hectares of koala habitat under the umbrella of Biocertification, a process which we believe has been flawed from the



beginning. If we are going to increase or even keep what we have in koala numbers, then major changes must be made to save our bushland from being engulfed in a sea of roofs, making this Bill a must so that plans like this do not get approved.

Biocertification is another word for clearing, as the final result is that bushland gets removed and some are retained but despite offsetting, there is a net loss, especially of critically endangered Cumberland Plain Woodland. This plan should not have been released until the recommendations of the Government ***Integrity of the NSW Biodiversity Offsets Scheme Inquiry*** are released and acted upon. This report is due out in October.

We need to make sure that if we are to protect koalas, adequate corridors are maintained, linking areas of bushland. This is well-stated by Assoc. Prof. Robert Close in *Campbelltown Koala Research and Database* (2019)

5.3.5 Protection of habitat and dispersal routes: This report has stressed the fact that the long-term survival of Campbelltown koalas depends on preserving habitat and maintaining dispersal routes. Loss of the latter means that mortality of dispersing young koalas would increase while loss of the former would mean that the 'Strip' would no longer be generating young koalas. Protection of both factors would also lead to the protection of the rich flora and fauna that share the existing habitat with the koalas

As yet no proper wildlife corridors within the CPCP have been implemented that would give safe, lasting passage for koalas and other wildlife that will use these bushland corridors, whether they are already there or have to be established. There are also no corridors linking major bushland areas, so once this Plan gets approved, the chance of development of such corridors has been lost. It is the short and long-term outcome that we must be looking at. If we don't do anything to stop the sprawl of this kind of development, then where will it end?

In every development, the proponent in their document will say they are saving so much land and want to destroy only so many hectares, but the result is loss of habitat and what is left is now put under constant strain by use and a lack of effective ongoing management plans. An example of this is the current Lendlease development at Mount Gilead, Campbelltown, where they want to destroy the koala habitat to make way for more of their development. Governments have fallen in love with the easy money that Bio Certification brings in offsets. Developers make their proposals and their language very convincing so much so that they will always get approved, usually with some minor modification by the moderators just to prove they care, but in the long run, it will not matter much to the outcome.

The NSW State Government under Matt Kean as Environment Minister ordered the Chief Scientist to report on the Campbelltown Koalas in February 2021. Since then, two other reports have been done by the Chief Scientist, as developers try to find a loophole in the wording, and the outcome now is that a significant koala population and other wildlife have a much-reduced corridor.

The Chief Scientist's reports stated that the corridor should be 425 meters wide. This should provide enough area for a koala's home range; however, it is stated as an average so that in many places it is a very much smaller width. Assoc. Prof. Robert Close found female home ranges ranging between 10 and 52 hectares with a mean of 25 hectares. This area was deduced from several koalas tracked between 2-12 years and these home range figures are now used by many consultants. The corridors within this Plan must be able to support the koalas' home range. As koalas are territorial and mark their home range, ample space must be available for other koalas to move past without entering other koalas' home range. Using Assoc. Prof. R. Close's report, we can see that not only did

koalas mainly use the western side of the Georges River but there were also three hubs where there was a larger area for them to exist. The chart shows (Figure 2) roughly how wide a corridor should be or if we have these 425-meter corridors then we must provide this larger hub for them to adopt for their home ranges. (See Figure 1) These are areas where koalas can breed, not just a linking corridor, but large areas of some 1 km by 3kms. There should be no dead ends; all corridors must link up to other large bodies of bushland. (See Figure 3)

Figure -1 Locations of 10 tracked

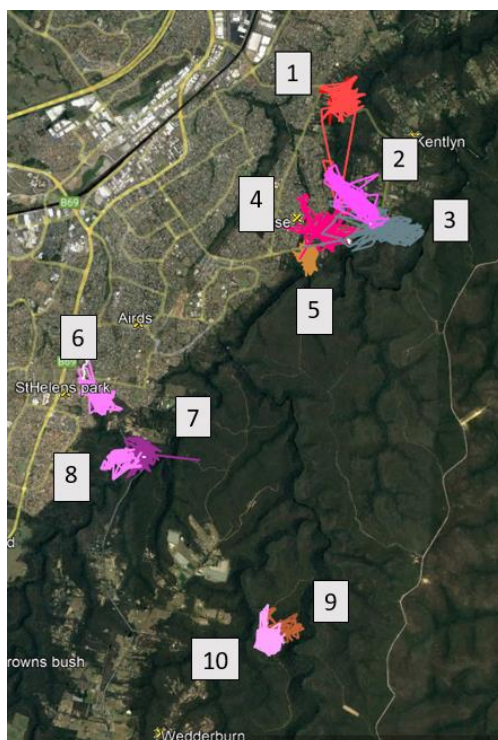
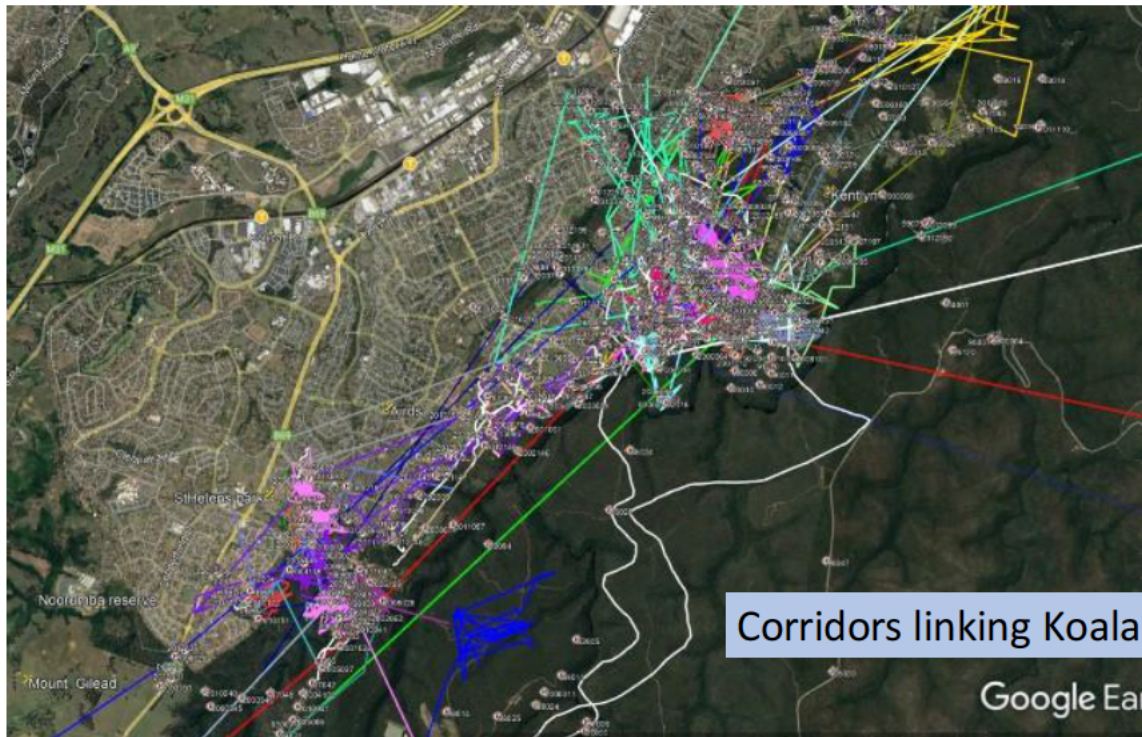


Figure 2 - Home ranges of 10 tracked female koalas in meters

Koala's Name	Length	Width	Colour	Years Tracked
1. Amanda	708	697		12.7
2. Lyn	1193	620		11.7
3. June	1682	901		8.9
4. Charlotte	876	565		5.5
5. Shirley	679	403		11.8
6. Courtney	562	334		9.0
7. Martine	636	517		13.3
8. Elle	590	401		12.11
9. Franchesca	880	486		11.5
10. Molly	604	555		11.9

Figure - 3 koalas movements



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29th September 2022