

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the Draft Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan.

I have lived at Coledale in the northern Illawarra for twenty years and love the natural values of the coastal area, the escarpment and the plains. The changes in the last twenty years have caused a degradation to the natural values of these areas driven in part by population growth but also an inability to genuinely balance commercial demands with the need for a diverse, healthy environment. In the northern Illawarra there are three forest types that are critically endangered. Koalas, once common here are now either locally extinct or close to it.

I welcome the NSW Government's Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan, as far as it goes, in the intent of the plan to provide a framework to meet competing needs in the region.

Unfortunately, the current plan compromises the remaining green belt around Sydney and diminishes our capacity to meet the cities fresh food needs. Australia's state and national planning and environment protection laws are failing to prevent extinction of plant and animal species. They are failing to prevent the loss of forest and woodlands.

Clear failures in this plan include:

- Land on the Cumberland Plain has already been designated as a "first priority" biodiversity offset area for two other major Growth Centres.
- The Plan allows the development that will impact 1,014 hectares of critically endangered Cumberland Plain Woodland or 16% of the remaining 6,400 hectares.
- The Plan lacks a firm commitment to the amount of land that will be protected and acknowledges that conservation land will be secured slowly over time.
- The Plan only commits to the creation of one reserve - the Georges River Koala Reserve.

I am particularly moved by the inadequacy of the plan to protect the Koala population. Koalas are not just an iconic species but measure of our broader treatment of habitat and biodiversity. If we cannot ensure Koalas thrive, we are admitting that we are driving whole ecological communities to the brink of extinction. For example:

- The Plan does not accept the Chief Scientist's recommendation to secure all of the east-west movement corridors for the koalas. Only the Ousedale Creek to Appin North east-west corridor will be protected.
- The proposed construction of 120 km of Koala exclusion fencing will isolate and fragment an expanding and thriving koala population.
- The Plan fails to set aside enough land to properly protect the koala population. The proposed Georges River Koala Reserve will eventually set aside 1,885 hectares to protect the koalas' important north-south primary habitat corridor and the Plan commits to protecting an additional 610 hectares of important koala habitat. But it falls far short of securing all of the primary, secondary and tertiary koala habitat corridors.