

# Draft Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan Submission – No E2 for SCA

## General comments

- The intention of the draft Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan (CPCP) is admirable but the development and outcomes are flawed.
- The volume and content of the Exhibition documents and the supporting legislations, regulations, research, etc, found on other websites that were required reading to understand and absorb the background and intent of the proposed CPCP were far too vast for the Exhibition timeframe.
- The Assessment Report (3256 pages) had neither continuous page numbering, nor click links to content topics which guaranteed making it extremely difficult and very annoying to read.
- The public consultations were grossly inadequate.
- The private consultations were few for private owners of ‘small’ properties and only driven by landholders, not DPIE as they should have been with such dramatic proposed outcomes for their properties.
- The workshops did not include private landholders only key stakeholders.

## Comments on proposed Strategic Conservation Areas (SCA) and proposed E2 rezoning

Whilst I realise that there was a large area to consider in this planning, SCA have been designated arbitrarily based on desk-top landscape-scale mapping, relatively few site assessments, and reliance on ‘known’ information by ‘experts’. However, that does not excuse the proposed rezoning to E2 without consultation and site visits to all properties that will be severely affected, especially the small landholders whose properties have been bundled to offset future urban developments.

There is no justifiable reason to zone the SCA as the highly restrictive E2 when zoning as E4 (environmental living) would serve the same purpose and achieve the same outcomes for conservation. More importantly, it would not have the same draconian effect on the owners of small acreage who came to Wollondilly LGA to enjoy rural living on our RU2 zoned properties.

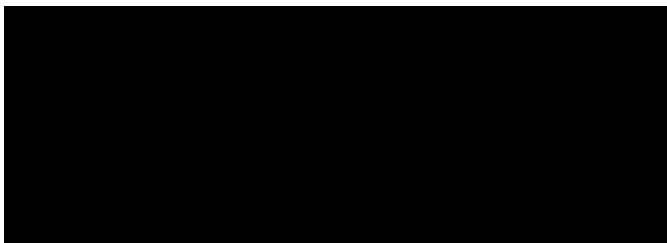
The introduction of thousands of homes and even more thousands of people just up the road will be hard enough without having to bear the burden of owning E2 zoned properties and the restrictions and loss of value it will impose.

### 1. Our property

We have a small parcel of land (2.85Ha) zoned RU2 that was mostly cleared of native vegetation and developed with a dwelling, garages, gardens, orchard, sheds, stables, dams, water tanks, swimming pool, boundary and internal fences and internal roads before we bought it in 1993 (see Fig 1 1994 aerial photo below from

<https://portal.spatial.nsw.gov.au/download/> [REDACTED]

Figure 1. Aerial photo 1994



Since then the property has continued to be used for agricultural and horticultural purposes in accordance with the RU2 zone description and use in Wollondilly LGA and their objective ‘To encourage sustainable primary industry production by maintaining and enhancing the natural resource base’. We have enhanced the property with plantings of non-endemic natives (for the birds and bees), deciduous exotic trees (for summer shade and winter sun), fruit

trees, nut trees, vegetable and herb gardens (for community sustenance) and flowers (for the birds and bees, beauty and cut flowers), private seed collection and plant nursery (to plant and for the local community).

The basic structure of the property remains the same as in 1994 but the crowns of the large, predominantly ironbark eucalypts have grown and mask the underlying structures in aerial photos. Also, most of the casuarinas, and many of the acacias and eucalypts have recently died due to the extended, severe drought (2017- early 2020).

## 2. Vegetation mapping

- The vegetation mapping and descriptions in the spatial viewer are faulty.
- Our property is shown as PCT 1395 with revised conditions of either thinned or intact and this is far from the reality as described above (see Our property).
- Our soil is not part of the shale sandstone transition as it is described as 'Rh', medium to coarse quartz sandstone dominance and part of the Hawkesbury Sandstone Group rather than those elsewhere in West Wilton that are 'Rwa' and 'Rwb', with shale or siltstone dominance and part of the Wianamatta Group ([https://resourcesandgeoscience.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/image/0009/344169/Wollongong-Port\\_Hacking\\_100K\\_Geological\\_Sheet\\_9029-9129\\_1st\\_edition\\_1985.jpg](https://resourcesandgeoscience.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/image/0009/344169/Wollongong-Port_Hacking_100K_Geological_Sheet_9029-9129_1st_edition_1985.jpg)).

## 3. Criteria for avoidance - Box 1 p91 draft CPCP

None of the criteria for avoidance are applicable to our property.

- Our property is not large (although I could not find a definition of 'large' in the draft CPCP) and the focus of the Plan is on securing large parcels of land with good quality, remnant vegetation (DPE What We Heard Report 2020-08).
- The vegetation does not fall into any criterion in (a)
- None of the threatened species criteria (b) nor ecological processes (c) criteria apply as the mapping relies on unproven data (e.g. vegetation, see above), or 'known' sources (but not specified), and BioNet records or recent survey data.
- Species mapping was done using knowledge-based methods (KPM) that means 'Assumed presence using a knowledge-based method was used to define species polygons for species where expert reports were not prepared or adequate species records were not available to complete a Species Distribution Model (SDM). KBMs mapped species habitat based on vegetation mapping plus additional habitat or geographic elements' (CPCP Assessment report page xi)
- None of the species of flora and fauna assessed in the Cumberland Plain Assessment Report (August 2020) were found in the vicinity of our property.
- Some years ago, a botanist for Wollondilly Shire Council used quadrats to survey our remnant native vegetation and found no endangered or vulnerable species.
- No koalas were seen at spotlighting sites for koalas in our vicinity (Figure 2 in the Conserving Koalas in the Wollondilly and Campbelltown Local Government Areas report, DPIE 2019).

## 4. Koalas and their Protection

We all want to protect koalas but in an appropriate manner.

- We assume that our property was assigned to the non-certified for biodiversity reasons because of the erroneous idea that koalas would either like to live here or pass through here on an imagined koala corridor, or highway

- No koalas have been seen or heard on our property in the last 27 years, nor in the vicinity. None of our neighbours seen or heard any evidence of the presence of koalas in the past 40 years.
- Koalas do not like our vegetation; they prefer trees grown on shale-rich soils (CPCP Sub Plan B)! Any remnant of native vegetation here is growing on sandstone-rich soils which produces drier and less appetising leaves than koala-preferred same species of trees growing in the shale-based or alluvial soils around Campbelltown LGA, Appin, Wilton old and new (but north of Picton Rd and west of the Hume Highway).
- The SEPP (Koala Habitat Protection) 2019 was recently reviewed, and proposed changes agreed to in the NSW Government was that both the pink map and the blue map for koalas be discarded and replaced with on-site determination of the presence of koalas and must incorporate the wording of 'highly suitable habitat' (7 Oct 2020). This must now be incorporated into the draft CPCP and would surely exclude the properties in Jakes Way and the vicinity.
- With this, and the Koala Habitat Protection Guideline (2019) which requires both suitable koala-palatable trees AND ALSO the establishment of presence, or past records of koalas to be deemed suitable koala habitat means that there is No highly suitable habitat, No 'core koala habitat' and definitely No 'koala corridor' here and No justification for E2 zoning on this basis.

#### **4. Bushfires and Asset Protection Zones (APZ)**

E2 zoning would exclude making and maintaining APZ.

This would lead to possible death by bushfire of residents, fire fighters and fauna.

#### **5. Zones and Rezoning in other areas of NSW**

- The land in Pheasants Nest, that is similar to ours but on the other side of the Nepean Gorge, is zoned E4.
- The Northern Councils E Zone Review (2015) by DPE stated that rezoning principles throughout the State should be applied uniformly and that to rezone to either E2 or E3, the current primary use is considered AND the land must meet one or more of the criteria for E2 or E3.
- Our property is zoned as RU2 and has been used consistently for at least the last 27 years under the benefits and restrictions applied for an RU2 zone in Wollondilly LGA and thus does not fulfil the requirements for either E2 or E3 zoning.

### **The Bottom Line – no E2 for SCA**

The SCA and the proposed rezoning to E2 in the draft CPCP for our area is based on inaccurate vegetation mapping, erroneous assumptions of high biodiversity values for unspecified species of flora and fauna, protection of valuable species that do not occur here, lack of protection for residents and the bush from bushfires, is inconsistent with zones in similar locations in Wollondilly LGA and the requirements to rezone in other localities in NSW.

The same conservation result can be achieved by less draconian zoning.

Edla Arzey

9 October 2020