

Objection to E2 classification – Submission

I write this submission to express my opposition to the proposed classification of my family home as E2– *Environmental Conservation*.

Despite trawling through 1000's of pages of unnecessarily repetitive documents and confusing maps, it is not clear to me what the justification is for rezoning my parent's land as E2, particularly when across the gorge E4 is deemed sufficient.

I feel disappointed and disheartened that the Minister and NSW Government would take such radical actions which seriously detriment my family and our neighbours, absent any clear justification or evidence-based assessment.

One clear example of how E2 zoning would detriment me personally is that my long-held dream to build a second dwelling or granny flat on the property in the future would not ever be possible under E2 classification. This would prevent me from living close to my aging parents on the land I love. This affects my future and could also affect whether me and my family are even able to remain living on the property.

My family and I love the environment and have spent years caring for the country we live on. I grew up at 10 Jakes Way and have enjoyed countless hours enjoying and exploring nature's sights, sounds, smells and tastes on our property and adjoining land areas. I planted trees with my parents and have seen the trees growing over more than 25 years. I have seen my parents working hard to care for the land and felt the sadness when many of our trees died in the many years of drought.

As a keen nature-lover, I also would have loved to have discovered koalas on our property. To that end, over a number of years I invited friends and parents of friends with specialist koala knowledge to visit our property for the purpose of finding any trace of koalas in our area. To my disappointment, none of them were able to find any trace of koala signs on our property. Also as a volunteer for the Conversation Volunteers Australia in northern NSW and the Central Coast, I was given training in surveying and identifying a range of animal species, including koala, yet I have never detected any evidence of koalas in our property. From all accounts, it seems koala have not been seen or heard here or on our neighbours' land for at least 40 years, perhaps much longer. Yes, we do have a few majestic *E. punctata* that have been here for many years, probably hundreds of years. There are no signs of koala nail marks on these trees. Simply, this land is not highly suitable for a koala habitat and far from an ideal corridor. All the signs indicate that koalas are not interested in this land that sits on sandstone soils which published research state does not support trees palatable to koala.

If it was clear that classification of our property as E2 was the best mechanism to achieve an important environmental objective, as nature lovers and environmentally conscious citizens me and my family would support it 100%. But this is not the case. The outcomes sought to be achieved by the E2 classification of our property are not supported by the evidence. The proposal is ill-defined, poorly explained, and has not been properly consulted on or ground-truthed. This is unacceptable because the impact for us is severe, and should not be overlooked without proper assessment and justification.

Given this, it is difficult not to feel cynical and disappointed by the intentions and real agenda of the Government. After approving massive development in the area, and turning a blind eye to land clearing, tree chopping and other forms of environmental destruction, the Government appears to be seeking green credentials for down town Wilton.

Why our land specifically became important for biodiversity is unclear. Nobody came to explore its biodiversity. Nowhere is there any explanation as to what exactly is being protected. This would actually be most welcome if it did not stink of hypocrisy.

Please tell me where these endangered plants are on our land? Please tell me what populations of plant or animal these measures are designed to protect and how that will be achieved by an E2 classification.

Please tell me why escapee and feral goats have been allowed to roam the neighbourhood for years despite this being reported if indeed this is an important area for biodiversity.

Please tell me why the NSW Government approved mining development on 52 hectares of prime koala habitat in NSW but are so determined to rezone land where there is no evidence of koalas to E2?

It is apparent and acknowledged in your published documents (*DPIE Frequently Asked Questions for the Draft Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan (August 2020)*), that developers have benefited from the reclassification of 250 hectares from Tx to urban in three Wilton precincts.

Would I be mistaken if I concluded that this is nothing but a cynical exercise, indulging developers at the expense of small land owners that are to be the sacrificial offsets for the massive developments that have already been approved in the place where real koala have actually roamed and lived?

I implore the NSW Government and Minister to reconsider this E2 classification proposal. Please align what appear to be commendable environmental objectives with the real truth on the ground. Please do your research and consult with affected communities properly. Please consider the impact this proposal has on me and my family and our surrounding neighbours as small landowners. Please act in a principled, reasonable manner relying on sound fact and evidence. Please change the proposed zoning of our property and area to something more reflective of its actual use and character, now and into the future, such as E4.

Sylvia Arzey

(daughter of George and Edla Arzey)

9 October 2020