

Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan – my objections

The name Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan is completely misleading as it will destroy, not conserve, habitat. The Plan will actually result in a loss of over 1,000 ha of woodlands. Already Cumberland Plain woodlands are critically endangered - less than 10% remains of the forest present when Europeans arrived.

Of the biota found within this ecosystem 25 plant species and 24 animals including koalas, spotted-tailed quolls and glossy black cockatoos, are already endangered. Destruction of woodland on this scale will increase the very real threat of their extinction. It is ridiculous to suggest tree-planting on waste land, funded by developers, could in any way compensate for the existing mature trees which koalas need right now.

The very high temperatures experienced in summer in Western Sydney are well documented. I watched 'Big Weather (and how to survive it)' on TV and particularly remember the demonstration of the effects of high temperatures on the performance of students at a Western Sydney school. On Friday 30th October, the problem of roasting hot playgrounds in Western Sydney was highlighted on the ABC TV 7 pm news broadcast. Urban heat island (UHI) effect is well documented and the main cause is the modification of land surfaces. Information provided in the CPCP acknowledges that removal of vegetation will increase temperatures experienced in Western Sydney, and exacerbate associated health risks. This will inevitably result in increased health costs for the government.

There is no guarantee that land of conservation significance will be automatically protected. Conservation offsets have been shown again and again to be inadequate and often quite unsuitable alternatives to the vegetation that has been destroyed.

I am particularly concerned about the lack of protection for koalas. Just one Conservation Reserve is proposed, on the edge of the Cumberland Plain. Much of that is already protected as Crown Land and it is nonsensical to suggest that the remaining area of Reserve could be added some time in the future. If it is not dedicated at the inception of the Plan, there is no guarantee that suitable land will be available at a later date.

The Chief Scientist recommended six bushland corridors for koalas between the Georges and Nepean Rivers but the CPCP guarantees only one, which is quite inadequate to allow dispersal of koalas across Cumberland Plain. The Koala Reserve must include the Peter Meadows Creek koala habitat. The road labelled 'Georges River Parkway' must not be built, as it will threaten the koala population.

Other proposed main roads should be re-aligned or routed through tunnels to avoid the destruction of high value bushland and open space. The Plan does not recognise the need and opportunity to extend the Western Sydney Parkland, as a contiguous green corridor, south to reach and link Mt Annan Botanical Gardens, Sugarloaf and Camden Park Estate, to Mt Gilead, Woodhouse and Menangle Ck corridors.



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