



Sutherland Shire Environment Centre

SSEC

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Monday, 29 May, 2023

Wollondilly Shire Council

Attention: Chief Executive Officer, for consideration by the Local Planning Panel.

By email: council@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au

RE: Objection to Modification Application for two DAs: DA/2021/249/2, and DA/2021/144/2
55 MACQUARIEDALE ROAD APPIN 2560.

Sutherland Shire Environment Centre is a not-for-profit community organisation that has been actively involved in advocating for the environment in the Sutherland Shire and surrounding regions since 1991.

We are writing regarding Walker Corporation's SECTION 4.55(1A) Modification Application for DA/2021/249/1 LOT 1 DP 1218358 55 MACQUARIEDALE ROAD APPIN 2560.

Please record this email as a record of our objection to the proposal.

Koalas are facing extinction in the wild by 2050. Surveys, and the official government Bionet database, shows koalas are thriving in the area this DA Modification is proposed, and that 3 generations of koalas have been recorded there.

The proponent of this DA is seeking to be allowed to remove or translocate these koalas. We condemn this proposal in the strongest possible terms. A motion opposing koala translocation from this area was passed unanimously last October at the Nature Conservation Council (NCC) conference. This motion had the support of all the 170+ Nature Conservation Council member groups.

Translocations are expensive and inherently hazardous; high rates of mortality have been recorded in translocated individuals due to stress, predation, malnutrition, dehydration, increased disease proliferation, human conflict, and inability to acclimatise (Massei et al., 2010). Studies of historical translocations of koalas have repeatedly shown that they do not constitute an acceptable conservation measure when other options are available.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) guidelines stipulate that translocations of any species must be completely justified, including through comparison with alternative solutions such as maintaining or increasing suitable habitat availability for extant populations (IUCN, 2013).

Assessment of previous translocation attempts demonstrate that koala mortality is unacceptably high; from 12% to as high as 37.5% when koalas were moved from Kangaroo Island to South-eastern SA. Between 2009 and 2014, the 180 koalas translocated away from East Coomera, Queensland had a 42% mortality rate (Queensland Government, 2018).

Koalas inhabit home ranges of varying sizes dependent on habitat and will not leave their chosen territory, only abandoning them if absolutely necessary. Some koalas have even been known to attempt to remain in their home range despite logging activities (Kavanagh, Stanton & Brassil, 2007). This means that moving koalas out of their home ranges, particularly into areas with already established koala populations can lead to stress and confusion (Duka & Masters, 2005). Numerous studies have shown translocated koalas disperse much further distances on release than normal, putting them at greater risk from a range of threats. (Parks Victoria, 2003) (Whisson, Holland & Carlyon, 2012) (Lee 2003) (Prevett, 1992).

Translocations of koalas are not an acceptable conservation measure when other options exist. Conservation priorities must include in situ efforts not limited to the preservation and enhancement of previously existing koala habitat, removing any requirement for translocation. As of February 2022, the Koala has been listed as endangered in Queensland, New South Wales, and the Australia Capital Territory (DCCEEW, 2022); thus, the highest conservation priorities must be afforded to this unique, charismatic, and emblematic species. Unnecessary translocations do not assist with this and in fact will only serve to drive the koala closer towards extinction.

The developer of this property has a duty of care, which should not be bypassed. It is unacceptable that this Modification Application seeks to remove conditions including a Koala Habitat Impact Mitigation Plan. The request to do so with this DA modification shows the proponent is dismissing best practice scientific advice.

This DA modification also seeks to drop reference to the need for connectivity between areas koalas inhabit, which is reflected in the NSW Chief Scientist's advice. Connectivity and wildlife corridors are critical if we are to save this species from extinction.

The modifications to the Koala conditions (13.7.1) are significant and inconsistent with Wollondilly's conservation efforts. If this Modification is approved it will undermine decisions made by the Council's own Local Planning Panel. Council must reject this modification to remove the Koala Habitat Impact Mitigation Plan.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Catherine Reynolds', written over a horizontal line.

Dr Catherine Reynolds
Convenor, Koalas, Resilient Habitat, and Wildlife Corridors