

A Collection of newspaper clippings

(2000 - 2015)

by

DR Robert L. Close

***On the research of koalas and
the environment in the Macarthur area***

Compiled by

Lynn Bowden and Stephen Fellenberg 2017

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Two folders with an array of newspaper clipping and documents on the koala and the environment collected by Dr Robert L. Close

Folder **TWO** has two sections:

- Newspaper clipping outside the Macarthur region (86 items)
- Newspaper clippings around the Macarthur area and relevant study areas involving Dr Robert Close between 2000 to 2016 (189 items)

Folder **ONE** has two sections:

- National Parks Association documents on the fight to save the Wedderburn koala colony (25 items)
- Newspaper clippings following the campaign to save Wedderburn koala colony between 1988 to 1999 (219 items)

The collection comprises over 400 newspaper clippings from numerous newspapers mostly on the koala, the environment and Dr Robert L Close and his research

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Newspaper Clipping in the Macarthur Area (2000 - 2015)

Date	Newspaper/ magazine/ reports	Title	Author
07-06-00	Daily Telegraph	Hopes climb for lost koala colony	Letitia Rowlands
16-06-00	Daily Telegraph Canberra	Mail Call- Robert Close* wants help ia a koala search	
24-06-00	Macarthur Advertiser	Bush protected	Amanda Ireland
25-06-00	Macarthur Chronicle	Glass maker fined after furnace leak	
04-07-00	Macarthur Chronicle	Pollution fear after gas leak	
19-07-00	Macarthur Advertiser	Koalas in line of fire (development site under siege)	Karen Smith
20-07-00	Sydney Morning Herald	Vanishing koalas	
10-10-00	The Chronicle	Support our koalas by writing to minister	Coral Sewell
10-08-00	The St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	Eric not bearing up well in hunt for love	Jenny Stokes
16-08-00	Macarthur Advertiser	Eric's been anything but idle	Steve Ward and Robert Close
05-12-00	The Chronicle	Stiff penalty for illegal dumping	Simone Richards
12-12-00	The Chronicle	Listing is great news	
20-12-00	Macarthur Advertiser	Outrage over koala shooting	Karen Smith
28-11-00	Macarthur Chronicle	Agents for new estate	
12-12-00	Macarthur Chronicle	Plans to clean up closed mine	
13-12-00	Macarthur Advertiser	Your doggie can get you in strife	
19-12-00	Macarthur Chronicle	Know your local creek	
08-05-01	Penrith City Star	Koalas feared under threat	Angela Cuming and Jeff McGill
08-05-01	Penrith City Star	Site full of koala food	Angela Cuming and Jeff McGill
08-05-01	Penrith City Star	Barely alive: 4000 killed each year	
08-05-01	Mt Druitt-St Marys Standard	Check for koalas	Angela Cuming and Jeff McGill
15-05-01	St Marys Star	ADI koala hunt	
15-05-01	Penrith City Star	On koalas' trail	Angela Cuming
05-06-01	Daily Telegraph	Shirley's a modern city koala	Stavro Sofios & Stephen Downes
13-06-01	Macarthur Advertiser	Our friend Shirley's still making news	Robert Close and Steven Ward
13-07-01	Daily Telegraph	No koalas on ADI (request for site survey 'ignored')	Simon Benson
13-07-01	Daily Telegraph	What's a year to Eric	Simon Benson
13-01-00	Daily Telegraph	West outrage at development	Nicoletter Burke
14-07-01	Daily Telegraph	Now or never at ADI site (letters to the editor)	
25-07-01	Macarthur Advertiser	Fruit bat flies into stormy debate	Steve Ward and Robert Close
26-09-01	Macarthur Advertiser	School's in for koala	
02-01-02	Daily Telegraph	Amazing koala shows how to survive fire	Simon Benson
02-01-02	Macarthur Advertiser	Battle to save the koalas after the fire	Karen Smith
17-01-01	Daily Telegraph	Koalas survive the fire storm	Simon Benson
06-03-02	Macarthur Advertiser	Clean-up day successful	
21-05-02	The Chronicle	Koala statement disputed	Robert L Close
10-06-02	San Francisco Chronicle	Hazardous habitat	Todd Woody
11-09-02	Daily Telegraph	Koala-friendly community's animal lifeline (Non local)	Natalie Williams
25-09-02	Macarthur Advertiser	Soil is the key to survival of koalas	Karen Smith
09-04-03	Macarthur Advertiser	Beware pets on the prowl	Steve Ward and Robert Close
23-04-03	Macarthur Advertiser	Marly's short life	Steve Ward and Robert Close
23-04-03	Macarthur Advertiser	More bark than bite	Eric Kontos
23-04-03	Macarthur Advertiser	Dog ban to save lives	Rebecca Senescall
30-04-03	Macarthur Advertiser	Your say- Dogs and koalas	Councillor Verlie Fowler
14-05-03	Macarthur Advertiser	Riverfest will have a look at lives of koalas	
26-11-03	Macarthur Advertiser	Friend of bushland will be missed	Steve Ward and Robert Close
03-12-03	Macarthur Advertiser	Longhurst fund to pay for collars	Steve Ward and Robert Close
21-01-04	Macarthur Advertiser	Become a skilled koala spotter	Steve Ward and Robert Close
04-02-04	Macarthur Advertiser	Animal dumping is a serious problem	Steve Ward and Robert Close
10-02-04	Macarthur Chronicle	Tiny Robbie fights for place in sun	Robert Pozo
11-02-04	Macarthur Advertiser	Four mysterious deaths points to canine culprits	Steve Ward and Robert Close
18-02-04	Macarthur Advertiser	Two more wallabies discovered dead	Steve Ward and Robert Close
25-02-04	Macarthur Advertiser	Shirley is battling on	Steve Ward and Robert Close
09-03-04	Macarthur Chronicle	Wallabies killed	Roma Dickins
06-04-04	Macarthur Chronicle	Mayor not convinced	Roma Dickins
10-04-04	Daily Telegraph	More than a colony can bear	Simone Richards
14-04-04	Daily Telegraph	Koala party poopers	Simon Benson
20-04-04	Macarthur Chronicle	Critical loss of wildlife habitat	
20-04-04	Macarthur Chronicle	Housing threat to koala survival	Mandy Perrin
21-04-04	Macarthur Advertiser	Signs of danger for koalas and their habitat	Robert Close
05-05-04	Macarthur Advertiser	Your say-Banfield's Backyard	S. Healslip
12-05-04	Macarthur Advertiser	Your say-Koalas	Yvonne Campbell
21-07-04	Macarthur Advertiser	Koalas are still living in danger	Amanda Garard
11-08-04	Macarthur Advertiser	Bait cuts down wait	Steve Ward and Robert Close
18-08-04	Macarthur Advertiser	Go lightly on bush	Steve Ward and Robert Close
26-09-04	Sun Herald	Koala path to halt decline of colony	Alex Mitchell
29-09-04	Macarthur Advertiser	Protection for koala colonies	Alex Mitchell (sun Herald)
28-09-04	Macarthur Chronicle	Koalas are safe	Melanie Darmody
27-10-04	Macarthur Advertiser	Girl guides catch Lyn snoozing	Robert Close
03-11-04	Macarthur Advertiser	Scouting for cubs in the bush	Robert Close
03-11-04	Macarthur Advertiser	Your say-Local koalas find safe haven at last	
24-12-04	The Daily Telegraph	Our native animals rise from the ashes	Kate Murray
08-09-05	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	Pool's cool but gum's fun	Amanda Carlin

Date	Newspaper/ magazine/ reports	Title	Author
22-03-06	Macarthur Advertiser	Campbelltown burnt to ashes by 1929 bushfire	
24-04-06	Macarthur Advertiser	Festival has green message	Alicia Bowie
01-09-06	The Uni News- Sydney Uni vol.38 p4	Koala return to their natural habitat	
01-09-06	UWS- Quarterly review vol 2 spring 2006	Help koala man find holy grail	
18-10-06	Macarthur Advertiser	Fire scorch bushland	Jessica Mahar
20-02-07	Southern Highland News	Borefield threat to koalas	
21-03-07	Macarthur Advertiser	Call to save bush	Alicia Bowie
29-08-07	Macarthur Advertiser	Bitter Battle, by gum	Jeff Mc Gill
05-09-07	Macarthur Advertiser	Developer defined ban	Jeff Mc Gill
12-09-07	Macarthur Advertiser	High drama as developers move in	Jeff Mc Gill
19-09-07	Macarthur Advertiser	Paradise is regained	Jeff Mc Gill
17-10-07	Macarthur Advertiser	Save our koalas: a plea to candidates	Jessica Mahar
06-02-08	Macarthur Advertiser	Testing your local knowledge	Jeff Mc Gill
16-04-08	Macarthur Advertiser	It's people that makes us great	Jeff Mc Gill
16-04-08	Macarthur Advertiser	Biologist retires- but won't stop working	Jessica Mahar
09-07-08	Macarthur Advertiser	16 faces of Macarthur-Dr Robert Close	
01-08-08	NPA- Macarthur Branch newsletter	Lecture series for 2008 - Dr Robert Close	
01-08-08	Australian Museum Explore	Koalas in the fast lane	
18-08-08	Daily Telegraph	As crow flies-drop bear takes a leap of faith	
03-09-08	Macarthur Advertiser	Wildlife invasion	Michelle Taverniti
03-09-08	Macarthur Advertiser	Wildlife invasion	Michelle Taverniti
30-09-08	Macarthur Chronicle	Susan back home	Marjo Hollowell
30-09-08	Macarthur Chronicle	Saving Susan	
30-09-08	Macarthur Chronicle	Furry friends need some neighbourly care	Mandy Perrin
29-10-08	Macarthur Advertiser	Koalas find power-ful ally	Michelle Taverniti and Iona Marchetta
	Macarthur Chronicle	Blinky Bill's roosting racket	Marjo Hollowell
11-03-09	Macarthur Advertiser	Powerful way to help koalas	Iona Marchetta
23-09-09	Macarthur Advertiser	Koalas heading south	Ashley Jarquin
03-02-10	Macarthur Advertiser	Koalas drop in for a look- and more	Alexandera Beech
10-03-10	Macarthur Advertiser	Campbelltown's damnable enemy	Jeff Mc Gill
31-03-10	Macarthur Advertiser	Curls is missing	Alexandera Beech
07-04-10	Macarthur Advertiser	Curious Curls found up a telephone pole	Alexandera Beech
21-04-10	Macarthur Advertiser	Thieves steal stuffed koalas from uni labs	
12-05-10	Macarthur Advertiser	Curl's adventures are over	Alexandera Beech
19-05-10	Macarthur Advertiser	Curls the koala dies	
04-07-10	Daily Telegraph	Urban koala's return visit	
24-07-10	Macarthur Chronicle	Baby joy	David Campbell
20-07-10	Macarthur Chronicle	Koalas just love our tasty trees	Robert Pozo
03-11-10	Macarthur Advertiser	Koala alert	
09-11-10	Macarthur Chronicle	Unexpected visitor tags Harry's name	David Campbell
17-11-10	Macarthur Advertiser	Science's daring pioneers gather knowledge of koalas	Jeff Mc Gill
17-11-10	Macarthur Advertiser	Science's daring pioneers gather knowledge of koalas	Jeff Mc Gill
08-12-10	Macarthur Advertiser	Jays of urban wildlife	Scott Dougherty
25-01-11	Macarthur Chronicle	Koalas living in our street? Surely you can't be Sirius!	Lisa Cosgrove
09-02-11	Macarthur Advertiser	Koala on the road to health	Megan Gorrey
23-02-11	Macarthur Advertiser	Campbelltown's furriest commuter	Sandra Siagian
23-02-11	Macarthur Advertiser	It's touch and go for orphan Marlee	Megan Gorrey
06-04-11	Macarthur Advertiser	Johnny settling into new home	Megan Gorrey
06-04-11	Macarthur Advertiser	Firmly urban koala found dead in tree	Megan Gorrey
18-05-11	Macarthur Advertiser	Koala invasion would be welcome	Megan Gorrey
03-08-11	Macarthur Advertiser	Koalas will be fine"	Megan Gorrey
05-10-11	Macarthur Advertiser	Hello, I'm Matari	Megan Gorrey
26-10-11	Macarthur Advertiser	Grassroots push pays off	Megan Gorrey
02-11-11	Macarthur Advertiser	Eager marsupials at large	Megan Gorrey
26-10-11	Macarthur Advertiser	Platypus proof	Megan Gorrey
09-11-11	Macarthur Advertiser	Second platypus found	Megan Gorrey
16-11-11	Macarthur Advertiser	Fresh hope for platypus	Megan Gorrey and Alexandra Pleffer
30-11-11	Macarthur Advertiser	Platypus sealed in a deadly embrace	Robert Close
25-01-12	Macarthur Advertiser	Developer refutes impact on koalas	Alexandra Pleffer
05-09-12	Macarthur Advertiser	Mac Chat- Survival of fittest	
	Macarthur Advertiser	Rail threat to koalas	Megan Gorrey
04-04-12	Macarthur Advertiser	Landmark clearing penalty	Alexandra Pleffer
22-02-12	Macarthur Advertiser	Future's bright koalas	Robert Close
28-03-12	Macarthur Advertiser	Dharawal Dawns	Alexandera Pleffer
28-03-12	Macarthur Advertiser	Dharawal park dawns	Alexandera Pleffer
04-04-12	Macarthur Advertiser	This is a win for Campbelltown's koala colonies	
30-05-12	Macarthur Advertiser	Isolation ends in cruel irony	Robert Close
26-09-12	Macarthur Advertiser	Just leave them alone	Robert Close
02-05-12	Macarthur Advertiser	Long battle to save koalas	Jeff Mc Gill
02-05-12	Macarthur Advertiser	Koalas V Airport	Alexandra Pleffer
02-05-12	Macarthur Advertiser	Koala versus airport battle looms	Alexandra Pleffer
02-05-12	Macarthur Advertiser	Keep an eye out for sickly fella	
09-05-12	Macarthur Advertiser	Airport now official	Alexandra Pleffer and Kerrie Armstrong

Date	Newspaper/ magazine/ reports	Title	Author
09-05-12	Macarthur Advertiser	Protect koalas, forget runway	
25-06-12	Macarthur Advertiser	Gang up at school	
30-05-12	Macarthur Advertiser	Big Koala	Alexandra Pleffer
26-09-12	Macarthur Advertiser	Koalas move closer to town	
24-04-13	Macarthur Advertiser	Vincent seemed a fitting name	Robert Close
29-05-13	Macarthur Advertiser	Has anybody seen Pindari?	Scott Dougherty
10-07-13	Macarthur Advertiser	Where's Pindari?	
03-07-13	Macarthur Advertiser	"Bad Deal"	Megan Gorrey
27-08-13	Macarthur Chronicle	Koalas' care is a priority	Peter Way
11-09-13	Macarthur Advertiser	Bush battle won against the odds	
11-09-13	Macarthur Advertiser	Our last Mac Koala column- a huge thank-you to Robert Close	Jeff Mc Gill
11-09-13	Macarthur Advertiser	A fond farewell with our last column	Robert Close
06-11-13	Macarthur Advertiser	We've found our missing koala	Megan Gorrey
11-12-13	Macarthur Chronicle	Look out for our furry friends	Amanda Partridge
19-03-14	Macarthur Advertiser	Hazards to go on notorious road	Alicia Sylvester
19-03-14	Macarthur Advertiser	University joins fight to save koalas	Scott Dougherty
15-10-14	Macarthur Advertiser	Koalas in street	
08-07-14	Macarthur Chronicle	Koala help is on hold	Tarek Elmerhebe
22-07-14	Macarthur Chronicle	Koala care still pressing	Vera Bertola
05-08-14	Macarthur Chronicle	Calls to care for koalas	Vera Bertola
30-07-14	Macarthur Advertiser	Project no danger to koalas / survivor of risky Appin Road	Katherine Fenech
05-08-14	Macarthur Chronicle	Brendan wakes up to find national treasure	Kimberly Caines
06-08-14	Macarthur Advertiser	Changers to protect koalas	Katherine Fenech
19-08-14	Macarthur Chronicle	Aboriginal community set up camp	
19-08-14	Macarthur Chronicle	Protesters pitch issues	Kimberly Caines
23-09-14	Macarthur Chronicle	Preserve habitat bush	Kimberly Caines and Vera Bertola
23-09-14	Macarthur Chronicle	Plea for more signage to prevent koala deaths	
23-09-14	Macarthur Chronicle	Call for Premier to spreading the word to protect our wildlife	Kimberly Caines
14-10-14	Macarthur Chronicle	Residents cry out as tree-cutters move in	Kimberly Caines
14-10-14	Macarthur Chronicle	Magpies evict hapless koala	
22-10-14	Macarthur Advertiser	Koala reaches the railway	Katherine Fenech
11-11-14	Macarthur Chronicle	Now that is a wild life	Kimberly Caines
27-01-15	Macarthur Chronicle	Vow to safeguard our fauna	Vera Bertola
10-02-15	Macarthur Chronicle	Letters to the editor-protecting koalas	Greg Warren
11-03-15	Macarthur Advertiser	\$1m package to help koalas	
10-08-15	Macarthur Chronicle	Koala taskforce promise gets thumbs up	Kimberly Caines
05-05-15	Macarthur Chronicle	meet the new neighbour	Tarek Elmerhebe
12-05-15	Macarthur Chronicle	Koala numbers grow	Robert Close
19-05-15	Macarthur Chronicle	Letters to the editor-Save Mt Gilead farm	
18-08-15	Macarthur Chronicle	Car collision blinds koala	Tarek Elmerhebe
19-08-15	Camden-Narellan Advertiser	Blind koala in need of a safe place to live	Martin Walsh
27-11-15	Macarthur Chronicle	Suburban koala escapes from traffic	Kimberly Caines



The koala makes a dash up a power pole in Glenfield last week.

VOX pop

RAQUEL EYLEY WOOD

It's heart breaking, all this development with no consideration at all to the wildlife.

LIZ WARD

Last I heard there are no koalas in and around Campbelltown, yet at least once a week there are reports of koala sightings in the Campbelltown area.

TANYA SPROULE

So sad. They need to consider the wildlife first before the dozers move in.

DORA JOE

The council and property developers insist there are no koalas where they're clearing bush for new housing! But we see a story like this week after week in Campbelltown ... so many frightened koalas being injured on the roads as they have nowhere to go!!!

RACHEL SUSSMAN

So sad, they miss their gum trees. We must do more to provide them with the home they need.

SUSAN WINTERS

Don't they do an environmental assessment before they start developing areas? So sad.

STEPHANIE ULLO LOMBARDO

That's sad; poor thing. He looks so scared.

THERESE WALKER

Awww. Hope it didn't get zapped.

LIZ SUMMERELL

Poor thing - look at its frightened eyes. It's lost its home and food supply and has no hope of moving into new territory as there is less and less every day.

Chronicle Facebook

Suburban koala escapes from traffic

Kimberley Caines

A QUICK-THINKING koala dashed to safety up a power pole at a busy intersection at Glenfield last week.

He is the latest of many koalas venturing into suburbia. Late last year one of the marsupials was found up a tree in the Wests Leagues Club carpark at Leumeah.

The Glenfield koala climbed up the pole just on dark to dodge traffic at the corner of Railway Pde and Belmont Rd, metres from

Glenfield train station.

"I went back there the next morning to see if he was still around," Glenfield resident Allan Briggs, whose friend saw the koala, said.

"There is a gum tree near the back of my home so maybe he went there. The council has got me so cranky for cutting down the trees."

Koalas are being forced out of their habitats as a result of land clearing to make way for development, according to Help Save the Wildlife and Bushland in

Campbelltown Facebook page administrator Carla-Maree Simmons.

Large swathes of Smiths Creek bushland have been bulldozed for the Airds Bradbury renewal project.

"We think the developments are a strong reason for the koalas coming out," Ms Simmons said.

"This is their quiet period. You will still see them but not as much. We encourage people to contact WIRES or notify our Facebook page of any sightings or injuries."

MacHoon
27/11/15

camdenadvertiser.com.au



Gentle soul: Dr Bree Talbot said Jack the koala was ready for surgery this week to provide long-term relief from painful eye injuries.

Picture: Sam Venn

Blind koala in need of a safe place to live

By **Martin Walsh**

JACK – an eight-year-old koala who recently suffered irreversible eye damage – is in good spirits ahead of surgery this week at the Avian Reptile and Exotic Pet Hospital at Brownlow Hill.

The animal was found recently in the middle of Appin Road with severe injuries to both eyes that have left him blind.

It is believed it's most likely the koala was hit by a car.

Associate veterinarian Bree Talbot said both of Jack's eyes would be removed to give him long-term relief.

"His injuries are localised to his eyes –

both eyes are severely injured with the left eye completely ruptured and the right eye incurring severe internal damage," she said.

"It is important that he undergoes this procedure as the eyes are not functional any more and, being blind, he may continue to bump and injure the eyes if they remain in place."

While Jack will never be able to return to the wild, Dr Talbot said she hoped a zoo or wildlife sanctuary would provide a "forever home" for the gentle-natured koala.

"He has so far adapted well to not being able to see; he has lost some confidence in climbing into his fork, but

given time, I think he should adapt well to a captive environment," she said.

"He is such a gentle koala and I am hopeful that he may be able to help contribute to future koala numbers which are decreasing fast."

The Avian Reptile and Exotic Pet Hospital is running a Save Our Wildlife month campaign to promote the plight of native animals like Jack and educate people on how to protect them.

To find out more about the Avian Reptile and Exotic Pet Hospital, Brownlow Hill, visit:
www.avianreptileandexoticpethospital.com.au.

Macarthur Chronicle 12th May 2015

Koala numbers grow

THE *Macarthur Chronicle* (May 5, 2015), reported that “since bushland in Airds was destroyed last year to make way for housing, many residents have reported sightings of koalas”.

However, the UWS koala research team has been recording increased sightings of koalas over the past few years in Smiths Creek Reserve.

This increase isn't due to bushland clearing and has been seen in many Campbelltown suburbs.

It is due to the longevity (more than 10 years) and regular, successful breeding of female koalas that have established territories in the Georges River bushland.

This resulting output of young koalas has to go somewhere and so many youngsters, ejected from the safety of their mothers' territories, visit backyards and schoolyards.

Unfortunately, many eventually find themselves on Appin Rd where the death rate is high.

We predict this year will be a bumper one for koalas and expect many more sightings during the dispersal season which normally peaks in August to September.

ADJUNCT ASSOC PROF ROBERT CLOSE, UWS

APPIN

Car collision blinds koala



The koala has lost his sight after suffering facial injuries.

Tarek Elmerhebe

A KOALA has lost his vision after he was believed to have been hit by a car in Appin last week.

The eight-year-old koala was brought into the Avian, Reptile and Exotic Pet Hospital in Brownlow Hill after he was found injured in the middle of the road.

Veterinarian Bree Talbot said the future did not look bright for the young koala named Jack.

“Jack will not be able to be released due to his injuries,” she said. “But as he is otherwise well, we’re hopeful that he may be able to go into a breeding plan or sanctuary where he can live a happy and healthy life once he has had surgery on his eyes.”

Jack is being placed on strong pain relief and antibiotics. He is also being kept in a dark room to avoid irritating his eyes.

Dr Talbot pleaded with drivers to be on the lookout for wildlife. “Koalas move around a lot during this season so please slow down and keep an eye out,” she said.

Dr Talbot said a dead koala was brought into the hospital last week which had also been hit by a car.

The news came just a week after the koala known as Nymboida died after being hit by a car in Ruse.

Report injured wildlife to the Avian, Reptile and Exotic Pet Hospital on 4655 0798, WIRES on 1300 094 737 or Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Services on 9413 4300.

Macarthur Chronicle 19th May 2015

Save Mt Gilead farm

I SEE Mt Gilead farm on Appin Rd is to become another housing estate. What a tragedy.

Mt Gilead is an 1812 land grant by Governor Lachlan Macquarie to Ruben Uther and has been a working farm ever since.

The suburb of Gilead takes its name from this property and it was the home of Lady Macarthur-Onslow who died in 2013.

I have been going to Mt Gilead for at least 12 years and know it well. It is a property with wonderful views and full of wildlife.

The last time I was there catching rabbits I saw a koala being chased by a fox and was able to save it as it climbed up a tree.

Now, Mt Gilead needs saving from developers.

The development plans are on exhibition at Campbelltown Council and online at campbelltown.nsw.gov.au/MtGileadUrbanReleaseArea

Tell Campbelltown Council “no development” and save this special place.

CRAIG VINCENT, Airds

LEUMEAH

Chronicle 5/5/15

Meet the new neighbour

KOALA MOVES INTO TOWN

Tarik Elmerhebe

LEUMEAH resident Greg Booth was surprised to wake up and find he was sharing his backyard with a symbol of Australia last week.

A koala was sleeping soundly, nestled in a tree, unaware of the fuss it was creating.

Mr Booth, whose house borders on Smiths Creek Reserve, said it was nice to catch a glimpse of one of Australia's remarkable animals outside his porch.

"It was great. I've lived here for 10 years and I've never seen one this close," Mr Booth said.

"Over the past year, particularly the past six to eight months, I've seen a lot more wildlife coming down here."

But he said while it was a nice sight, it placed a question mark on what it meant for the future of the Macarthur region's koalas.

The 37-year-old said he believed the clearing of bushland nearby was the reason he had seen a noticeable in-

crease in wildlife creeping up towards his doorstep.

"I think because of the housing development at Airds, koalas have started moving from Smiths Creek down to us," he said. He

hoped any koalas that were in the area were not in danger from suburbia.

"I hope that Smiths Creek Reserve remains protected and looked after. It would be sad if wildlife lost their

homes," he said. "I don't want to start seeing them getting hit by cars and things like that out here....it was nice to see but I hope they're being protected."

Since bushland in Airds

was destroyed last year to make way for housing, many residents have reported sightings of koalas. One koala was even rescued from a tree in the Wests Leagues Club car park.



A koala nestles in a tree in a Leumeah backyard and (inset) Greg Booth has called for the protection of their habitat.

Pictures: ROBERT POZO



\$1m package to help koalas

A Labor government would fund a \$1 million package to protect and nurture Campbelltown's local koala population.

ALP candidate for Campbelltown Greg Warren said if Luke Foley wins the election on March 28, a local Koala Taskforce would be created with responsibility for protecting the animals into the future.

"We are very fortunate to have Sydney's last remaining koala colony on our region's doorstep, but that also means we are the custodians of protecting their future — it's time for us to take action," Mr Warren said. "I've had hundreds of conversations on doorsteps, at train stations and on street corners with members of our community who want to see our koala colony not just survive but thrive."

The taskforce will work with Campbelltown Council on a plan of management.

Macarthur Advertiser

11th March 2015



Stephanie Haule, Greg Warren, Carla-Maree Simmons and Ricardo Lonza support Labor's \$1 million commitment to protect Campbelltown's local koala population.

Picture: TIM CLAPIN

Koala taskforce promise gets thumbs up

Kimberley Caines

THE NSW ALP has committed a \$1 million package to protect and nurture Campbelltown's koala population if it is elected on March 28.

Campbelltown Labor candidate Greg Warren was chuffed when he saw a koala on site when talking to residents about the ALP's Campbelltown Koala Taskforce at Smiths Creek Reserve last week.

He said the proposed taskforce would bring together stakeholders to ensure infrastructure and plans were in place to protect koalas into the future.

"We are very fortunate to have Sydney's last remaining koala colony on our region's doorstep but that also means we are the custodians of protecting their future," Mr Warren said.

"I've had hundreds of conversations on doorsteps, at



A koala is spotted in a tree at Smiths Creek Reserve on Thursday.

Picture: TIM CLAPIN

train stations and on street corners with members of our community who want to see our koala colony not just survive but thrive."

The taskforce will address issues including road safety, koala bridges and tunnels, dog attacks and koala escape routes, clearing controls on key habitat, and appropriate bushfire management.

Help Save the Wildlife and Bushland in Campbelltown Facebook group administra-

tors Carla-Maree Simmons and Ricardo Lonza said the funding would help protect the region's koala colony.

"Mr Warren is the first politician to help the koalas to this extent," Ms Simmons said. "We are at a loose end with (Campbelltown state Liberal MP) Bryan Doyle. He said he needed scientific proof that koalas were living in Campbelltown."

Campbelltown resident Stephanie Haule said she

saw a koala on the roof of her home just before Christmas.

"It came out of the bush and climbed across my roof to get to a gumtree in my backyard when it saw a dog in the street," she said.

"If you go into the Smiths Creek Reserve you will see them every day but prior to the developers digging up the koala habitats, you would never see them.

"The clearing of the land is having an impact."

Vow to safeguard

Macarthur Chronicle 27th January 2015

DISEASE-FREE KOALAS WOULD BE PROTECTED UNDER LABOR

Vera Bertola

THE NSW Labor Party has promised to look into creating a formal policy for the protection of the Macarthur region's disease-free koala colony.

Campbelltown ALP candidate Greg Warren secured the commitment from Labor leader Greg Foley, after the party announced the creation of a koala national park on the north coast, if elected to power on March 28.

Mr Warren said consultations were already taking place with stakeholders.

"Options are being explored as to the best way of protecting colonies in Campbelltown, Airds, Kentlyn, St Helens Park and Wedderburn," he said.

Mr Warren said the ALP had a state-wide position on the preservation of koala colonies, and he was keen to ensure it extended to the Macarthur region.

The protection of local colonies has come to the fore in recent months, with a high number of the mammals getting into strife in suburbia.

In November, a juvenile male koala crossed Pembroke Rd in Leumeah and was later plucked out of a tree by firefighters in an electrical storm in the carpark at West Leagues Club.

A few days later, the same fella was "arrested" after giving police the run around on the Moore Oxley Bypass, Campbelltown.

In October, a koala was found scratching on the back door of a Leumeah home and another was seen in a backyard at Kentlyn.

In September, a St Helens Park resident spotted a koala in his front yard in the middle of the night.

Mr Warren said NSW needed to embrace the fact that koalas in the Macarthur



STATE ELECTION 2015

KOALA PARK

WHAT: Call for protection of koala colonies in the Campbelltown area

WHERE: Airds, Ruse, St Helens Park, Kentyn and Wedderburn

WHO: Campbelltown ALP candidate Greg Warren

ALP ELECTION PROMISE: Great Koala National Park in Coffs Harbour region

DETAILS: Encompass 315,000ha of public land (175,000ha state forest and 140,000ha existing conservation areas)

PROTECTION: The park would safeguard up to 4550 individual koalas or 20 per cent of the state's population

NATIONAL: Calls for a Koala Protection Act

region were among the last disease-free colonies in Australia. "Reports are telling us the colony is continuing to grow," he said.

"That's good news, but it makes it more important that we get the appropriate protections in place."

He said he was hopeful Mr Foley would visit the region himself to see the colonies first-hand.

Campbelltown state Liberal MP Bryan Doyle emphasised that saying something and doing something were different things.

He highlighted the Liberal Party's creation of Dharawal National Park and said "koalas can enjoy that to their hearts' content".

"I hope Luke Foley continues to bark up gum trees," he added.

our fauna

Macarthur Chronicle 10th February 2015

Protecting koalas

I WOULD like to thank Leah McKenzie for her letter to the editor (*Macarthur Chronicle*, February 3) regarding the important issue of preserving and protecting our local koala colony.

Leah's interest and passion for protecting our koalas is a reflection of the many conversations I've been having on doorsteps, shopping centres and train stations about this very issue.

I want to see our koalas not only survive but thrive as I feel it is truly unique and special for the Macarthur region to have one of the last disease-free koala colonies in our backyard, and I am actively campaigning for their protection.

I have heard the concern of the community and I am making sure the ALP hears that concern.

Labor has announced a Labor government would create a dedicated Great Koala National Park on the NSW north coast. Further to this, a Labor government is committed to protecting our nation's national icon which is also a vulnerable and endangered species.

I am happy to be contacted by any member of our community who wants to work towards better protection of our koala colony.

GREG WARREN,
ALP candidate, Campbelltown

Now that is a wild life!

ONE KOALA RESCUED BY FIREYS, ARRESTED BY POLICE IN LESS THAN A WEEK



SAFE AND SOUND

WHAT: A juvenile male koala was "arrested" by police on Sunday and rescued from a carpark after Wednesday's electrical storm

WHO: NSW Dog Unit, WIRES, and Fire and Rescue NSW St Andrews

WHERE: Near Tim's Garden Centre, Campbelltown, and West Leagues Club, Leumeah

WHY: A large number of koalas are being spotted in residential areas due to recent redevelopments

koala was "arrested" by police on Sunday and rescued by firefighters and WIRES at West Leagues Club last Wednesday.

Kimberley Caines

AN ADVENTUROUS koala has had a rough week, dodging traffic, dogs and an electrical storm, ending up in a tree in a car park before being "arrested" by police.

The juvenile male koala was let off with a warning after being taken into police custody in the early hours of Sunday. He was spotted weaving through traffic in Moore Oxley Bypass, Campbelltown, at 2am. NSW Dog Unit's Sen-Constable Brett Barry was first on the scene.

"After failing to comply and move along, numerous warnings were issued, but the koala failed to comply," the dog unit's Facebook page stated.

"The koala was eventually arrested and placed for safety in a police vehicle."

Police released the koala in nearby bushland after contacting the RSPCA.

Almost four days earlier, at 4.30pm last Wednesday, firefighters pulled the same little fellow from a tree in the car park at West Leagues Club in Leumeah. Rescuers said he was lucky to be alive.



Bulldozers continue land clearing along Smiths Creek Reserve bush corridor in Airds last week.

Picture: IAN SVEGOVIC

He was found kilometres from any natural habitat and would have had to cross heavy traffic on Pembroke Rd. He was rescued after a major electrical storm had passed.

"The koala was in a dangerous site," WIRES southwest branch volunteer

Carla-Maree Simmons said. "If he did come down on his own, it was a possibility he would have been hit by a car.

"It's one lucky koala. How he made it across the road in one piece is unbelievable."

Ms Simmons thanked the firefighters who rescued the koala despite receiving sev-

eral other call-outs due to the electrical storm.

"They went up about 20 to 25m in a cherry picker and flagged him down," she said.

The koala had no injuries and was released in Smiths Creek Reserve.

St Andrews senior firefighter Peter Morthen said it was unusual for a koala to be so close to suburbia.

"He was a fair way up and when he almost got down he jumped from one tree to another," Mr Morthen said. "It's not every day you see a koala jump."

More koalas are being forced out of their habitats as a result of redevelopments such as the Airds Bradbury Renewal Project.

They are coming into close contact with humans and have to cross dangerous roads to find a home.



The koala reaches the safety of a tree. Picture: WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS IN CAMPBELLTOWN FACEBOOK

Magpies evict hapless koala

A KOALA was forced to keep his head down and make a run for it as he was chased by two swooping magpies on Thursday.

The male koala made a poor decision when he decided to share the same tree as a pair of nesting magpies at Campbelltown East Public School.

As he tried to snooze, the birds continually harassed him, finally forcing him to move. The koala made a dash across open space to bushland at Smiths Creek Reserve, with the black-and-white dive-bombers in hot pursuit.

Help Save the Wildlife and Bushland in Campbelltown Facebook page administrator Carla-Maree Simmons said the koala was getting harassed all day.

"The magpies were trying to get to him in the tree, but he was surrounded by branches," Ms Simmons said.

"When the koala got down, the poor thing was chased all the way to the reserve. He moved pretty damn quick."

A NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service spokesman said the magpies' protective behaviour was expected to mellow by the end of the month.

Ms Simmons raised concerns that more koalas were being forced out of their habitat as a result of the Airds Bradbury Renewal Project, which is bringing them into contact with humans, and even magpies.

"We feel koalas are more in danger now than ever before because of the development," she said.

She said that since the redevelopment, the Facebook page administrators were sighting at least six koalas a week.

■ **Human targets: pages 16 and 17**

Check out the video of the koala chase at macarthurchronicle.com.au

Koala reaches the railway

By Katherine Fenech

OBSERVANT Ingleburnians may glimpse a koala near the busy railway line, off Freeman Circuit.

Local koala expert Rob Close has asked residents to keep their eyes open for the adventurous marsupial, which could be one of the oldest surviving in the wild.

"This animal was reported to have two red eartags.

"But the only animal with that combination is Mathew, tagged as an adult in September 1999, at 32 Hansens Road, Minto Heights," Dr Close said. "We'd estimated his age at the time was four — so he could now be 19."

Mathew was seen near the railway tracks and Dr Close said anyone who spots him should call 0407 408 149 so trained volunteers can check the koala's eartags to verify his age.

"To get to Freeman Circuit from Hansens Road, Mathew must have crossed four kilo-

metres of difficult country, possibly moving from reserve to reserve. We've found old males are sometimes driven out of the best habitat by younger, stronger males and finish up in exposed areas."

He said female koalas may appear in unusual places when they take a holiday to choose a male with the most impressive bellow.

"The major reason so many koalas are appearing in suburbia is that the females are living and breeding for 10 to 14 years, leading to many joeys each year trying to find their own territories.

"As most of these territories are occupied by mature females, the youngsters may have to travel large distances. Inevitably some will move into the suburbs."

Dr Close said Campbelltown's estimated 150 female koalas give birth to at least 100 joeys annually, which leads to many marsupials moving through the bushland to find a new home.



■ If you see a koala in danger call WIRES, 1300 094 737 or Dr Robert Close, 0407 408 149.

Left: Campbelltown's koalas get around — this little trekker emerged as far away as Menai in 2011.

Macarthur Advertiser 22nd October 2014

Bulldozers flatten gum trees at Smiths Creek Reserve on Georges River Rd, near Airlds, on Wednesday morning.

Picture: ROBERT POZO



Residents cry out as

tree-cutters

move in

Macarthur Chronicle 14th October 2014

FEARS FOR KOALA HABITAT IF OPEN SPACE NOT PROTECTED

Kimberley Caines

WILDLIFE groups and residents are expected to pack Campbelltown Council's meeting tonight in a last-ditch attempt to save open space and wildlife habitat in Airlds from the bulldozers. Councilors will consider the transfer of community open space in Airlds to the State Government as part of the Airlds Bradbury Renewal Project.

At last Tuesday's corporate governance committee meeting, Independent councillor Sue Dobson asked why the council was giving up at least \$50 million worth of land only to receive \$12.5 million worth of community infrastructure. "Where is the balance of the money?" Cr Dobson asked. "All the land in Airlds is prime real estate." More than 40 residents filled the gallery at the planning and environment com-



Susanna Jones is calling for the protection of wildlife habitat and open space in Airlds. Picture: IAN SVEGOVIC

FINAL DECISION
WHAT: Campbelltown councilors will consider the fate of open green space and wildlife habitat in Airlds as part of a range of recommendations on the Airlds Bradbury Renewal Project
WHEN: Tonight (October 14) from 7pm
WHERE: Campbelltown Council chambers, corner of Queen and Broughton streets
WHO: The community is invited to attend

urgent adjustments to the plan and slammed councilors over the lack of community consultation. There was an air of confusion as councilors struggled to respond to controversial questions by four residents who addressed the committee.

Nea Makowski called for urgent project adjustments. "Airlds will require the removal of almost every mature tree." Ms Makowski said. "The koalas have to traverse Airlds next to a new road and will be required to cross four instead of two roads. "They won't have any trees for protection for at least another 15 years when the new plantings are nearing a sturdy size for the koalas to utilise."

On Wednesday, chainsaws and bulldozers moved into College Rd, Airlds, smashing down trees which are more than 150 years old. Bradbury resident Susanne Jones sent an open letter to councilors yesterday, expressing her concerns over a self-proclaimed green council allowing the loss of trees that were pre-

Smiths Creek Reserve, which is home to koalas and other wildlife. "Are the ratepayers of Campbelltown subsidising the extension of Campbellfield Ave for the Airlds Hotel? "It just doesn't add up," he told the meeting, saying the road would link hotels at

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Susanna Jones is calling for the protection of wildlife habitat and open space in Airlds. Picture: IAN SVEGOVIC

mittee. There was an air of confusion as councillors struggled to respond to controversial questions by four residents who addressed the committee.

Mr Smithers argued that the council should listen to the community during the development process. "The councillors of Campbelltown Council and the bureaucrats within the system have the opportunity to do what is right with this redevelopment," he said.

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Call for Premier to

Macarthur Chronicle 23rd September 2014

Spreading the word to protect our wildlife

Kimberley Caines

TWO passionate wildlife activists behind the Help Save the Wildlife and Bushland in Campbelltown Facebook page are fierce advocates of the Airds natural environment.

The page's administrators, Carla-Maree Simmons and Ricardo Lonza, have spent the past year exploring reserves and bushland across the Campbelltown area in a bid to help save and nurture the region's native animals which include koalas, wallabies, possums and echidnas.

They are particularly concerned about the future of wildlife in Airds as bulldozers move into the Smiths Creek bushland.

"We will stand in front of the bulldozers if we have to because we know koalas go through there. We just want them (the council and developers) to stop and think about the wildlife," Miss Simmons said. "We are trying to save our koalas in Airds as the area has some of the last remaining colonies that are disease-free."

Daily, the pair upload photos of wildlife sightings, post interesting facts and explain

LEND A HAND

WHAT: Help Save the Wildlife and Bushland in Campbelltown Facebook page was set up last year
WHO: Carla-Maree Simmons and Ricardo Lonza
WHY: To protect and save wildlife in the region
GET INVOLVED: Like the group on Facebook to report wildlife sightings

what to do if a native animal is spotted. "Our page is for people to share their photos of encounters they have had with local wildlife and to ask questions," Mr Lonza said.

"It's also for reporting all sightings on wildlife. If the animal is injured, we tell them to report it straight away to WIRES (Wildlife Information Rescue and Education Service)."

The duo confirmed they were not a rescue group but worked hand-in-hand with WIRES.

Miss Simmons encouraged people to like their page and share wildlife information.

"If a resident sees any wildlife whether it is a wallaby, an echidna, parrots even a possum, we want them to share it with us," she said.



Renee Faron with daughter Ella, 5, and Carla-Maree Simmons inspect the destruction of bushland at Airds last week. Picture: ROBERT POZO

Plea for more signage to prevent koala

Help Save the Wildlife and Bushland in Campbelltown Facebook page is calling on Campbelltown Council to install koala signage throughout the area.

Carla-Maree Simmons and Ricardo Lonza (pictured), who run the wildlife support Facebook page, are urging motorists to slow down and pay attention to surroundings near

bushland. They contacted the council and Campbelltown state Liberal MP Bryan Doyle asking for more wildlife signs after koalas were killed on roads recently. "Slow down for our wildlife, especially in wet and foggy conditions, otherwise it's our poor wildlife that will pay the price," Miss Simmons said.

"There are three signs at

Kentlyn and one at Wedderburn, but we really need them in other suburbs because we have a lot of koalas in the Campbelltown area."

The group has requested for additional crossings signs at Airds, St Helens Park, Wedderburn, Ruse, Leumeah and Appin. It has also asked the council to consider installing speed humps to slow down drivers

in wildlife areas to prevent more koala deaths.

"Marsupial breeding season is ramping up which means more koalas will be roaming about in search for a mate," Mr Lonza said.

Miss Simmons said the pair was concerned for the koala corridors in Airds as stage one of the Airds Bradbury Renewal Project was under way.

deaths



preserve habitat bush

Macarthur Chronicle 23rd September 2014



This koala was spotted in a tree in Peppin Crescent, Airds, last year.

Kimberley Caines and Vera Bertola

AS THE bulldozers sweep across Airds, experts have again emphasised the importance of protecting the habitat of vulnerable koalas.

With stage one of the Airds Bradbury Renewal Project under way, experts are concerned not enough thought has been given to transition areas and green corridors for koalas.

Australia Walkabout Park general manager Tas Barnard said it was only in the last two years that people realised koalas needed a "surprisingly" large range. "We think they sit in trees munching on leaves; we are only properly understanding they need a range of tens of kilometres," she said.

"If we interrupt their transition areas, we interrupt their feeding and mating areas."

SUBURB UPGRADE

AIM: Transform the original 1470 social housing homes into a mixed income community of more than 2000 homes - 70 per cent private and 30 per cent public housing
WHEN: During the next 15 to 20 years
ANNOUNCED: November 2011

UNDER THREAT

POPULATION: Only 2000 to 8000 koalas in the wild
STATUS: Although not officially endangered, the population has dropped by 90 per cent in less than a decade
WHY: Destruction of the koala's natural habitat
THREATS: Urban development (vehicles, dogs), logging, agriculture

WILD LIFE Sydney Zoo curator Will Meikle said urban expansion always had a negative impact on koala populations.

"When there is a loss of habit and (tree) connection ... koalas spend a longer time on the ground tracking between trees," he said. "They are more at risk from vehicles and urban dogs."

Campbelltown independent Councillor Sue Dobson is calling on Premier Mike Baird to halt the project in a last-ditch attempt to save

for koalas. It's the last breeding colony in a metropolitan area," Cr Dobson said.

"Why are they doing this? The ratepayers have to get their land back."

UrbanGrowth NSW head of retail transition Robert Sullivan said Smiths Creek would be retained and rehabilitated as a conservation area.

"Existing trees will be retained, weed removal works undertaken, and propagation and planting of native endemic plants carried out," Mr Sullivan said.

"An area of degraded trees adjacent to the Smiths Creek Reserve will be removed as part of the development consent issued by (Campbelltown) council and in line with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Protection Act 1999."

Mr Sullivan said contractors followed a tree removal protocol to ensure wildlife was looked after.

"The trees are checked and, if there are wildlife identified, WIRES are contacted immediately to assist," he said.

"Over the redevelopment project, more trees will be planted than removed, and key environmental areas will be rehabilitated and conserved."

At last Tuesday's Campbelltown Council meeting, Labor Cr Anouack Chanthivong called for the redevelopment to move at a more rapid pace.

He dismissed concerns over the koala and wildlife corridors and the open space, saying they had been dealt with. "My concern is for any future delay. The delay has always been that council has had one too many meetings about this," Cr Chanthivong said.

"We want some action to start and there will be no more delays as far as I'm concerned."

EXPERTS WARN COLONY IS AT RISK AS BULLDOZERS CLEAR WAY FOR ESTATE



Kimberley Caines

THE men at the forefront of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Airds have been overwhelmed with support from the community.

Gungadin, Mudgoolagong and Koori Pete, who have asked to be known by their tribal names, erected two tents last week to show their concerns over the Airds Bradbury Renewal Project.

They feel a close connection to the land and wildlife, which is at the heart of their peaceful protest against the project swallowing up community open space.

Gungadin said he wanted the community to be heard.

"This is our own solidarity march. This is sacred land that we are on," he said.

"We want to look after our environment and we're sick of people tearing down our lands."

Koori Pete said he welcomed community support and encouraged residents to visit the site to show their interest.

Macarthur Chronicle Facebook page readers were largely supportive of the men, with many offers of help.

"I'm so, so happy. We are asking people to come and support us and maybe bring some tucker and a couple of blankets," Koori Pete said.

He said he wanted the site to remain the way it was.

"We strongly believe this piece of land should stay intact," he said.

"This is the lungs of Campbelltown. These trees are life-givers."

Help Save The Wildlife and Bushland in Campbelltown Facebook page administrator Carla-Maree Simmons said she was thrilled with the support.

"I think they need more people getting involved and maybe some sponsorship," she said.

Aboriginal community set up camp

THE gathering at Airds is not the first time Aborigines have raised awareness of an issue using a tent embassy.

In 1972 they erected tents in Canberra to protest against a court decision over mining operations on Aboriginal land.

The Canberra Aboriginal Tent Embassy first ambassador and last remaining founder, Michael Anderson, will talk at a public forum on the Airds Bradbury Renewal Project on Saturday, August 30, from 10am at the Campbelltown Civic Centre.

The three Aboriginal men who have set up camp in Airds are protesting against



This koala was sighted outside Woodland Rd Public School, St Helens Park, on Thursday. Picture: ABBEY GIBSON

the loss of land and threats to wildlife from the redevelopment.

Campbelltown Independent Councillor Sue Dobson said she supported the Abor-

iginals right to protest. "I support the redevelopment but I do not support the current design that will destroy Smiths Creek Reserve, the koalas and the Cumberland Plain Woodland and Shale Sandstone Transition Forest," Cr Dobson said.

"I support the Aboriginal community's right to protest for the saving of the sacred site. I'm concerned about the koalas and the Aboriginal people are worried about their site."

Campbelltown Mayor Clinton Mead did not return the *Macarthur Chronicle's* calls for comment by our deadline.

Macarthur Chronicle 19th August 2014

PEACEFUL RALLY

WHAT: Members of the Aboriginal community have sent up tents in a peaceful protest against the Airds Bradbury Renewal project

AIM: The redevelopment project aims to transform the original 1470 social housing homes into a sustainable mixed income community of more than 2000 homes, 70 per cent private and 30 per cent public housing

WHEN: During the next 15 to 20 years

ANNOUNCED: November 2011

CONCERN: Sacred land destroyed and wildlife corridors and open space under threat

DETAILS: housing.nsw.gov.

AIRDS

Protesters

pitch issues

Changes to protect koalas

Most of a local reserve, set to be swallowed up by the Airds-Bradbury redevelopment, has been saved. **Katherine Fenech** reports.

McA 6/8/14

MORE of Baden-Powell Reserve, located next to St Johns Road, will be retained as open space under an amended proposal from developers of the Airds-Bradbury Urban Renewal Project.

Campbelltown state MP Bryan Doyle said changes were made to accommodate a "small koala habitat" after developers UrbanGrowth NSW consulted local koala expert, Dr Robert Close.

Mr Doyle said the reserve "will increase in size by 80 per cent" but will retain the footpaths, new trees and play equipment detailed in the previous proposal. It would also provide trees the koalas could use to escape from dogs and other perceived dangers.

"Local koala experts have confirmed with UrbanGrowth NSW that a small population of koalas does inhabit the Georges River Reserve, however their irregular movements through the suburb do not constitute what is known as a 'koala corridor'," Mr Doyle said.

An earlier version of the voluntary planning agreement swallowed a large chunk of Baden Powell Reserve, relocated Kevin Wheatley Reserve and cut into Smiths Creek Reserve, converting them to housing.

The renewal project covers about 200 hectares of land and once completed will include about 2000 residential lots, made up of 70 per cent private and 30 per cent public housing.

Councillor Sue Dobson has long campaigned to save koala corridors that she says are threatened by the revamp.

Cr Dobson and mayor Clinton Mead will meet with NSW Planning Minister Pru Goward on Friday to discuss the plan.

"I will be requesting that the minister look at some change of design and explain why there is a great need to protect the significant environmental and cultural impact the redevelopment will have on Smiths Creek and its unofficial wildlife corridors to the Georges River," Cr Dobson said.

Dr Close, who has studied koalas for 25 years, said the

Smiths Creek Reserve koalas were all in the northern portion, which would remain untouched by developers.

"Koalas appearing in Smiths Creek south will be young animals pushed out of their mothers' territories in Smiths Creek north or in bushland beside the Georges River and looking for their own places," he said. "These young, dispersing koalas will not find suitable, permanent territories in Smiths Creek south because there is insufficient bushland."



Welcome guest: It was hard to tell whether Brendon Levot or his three-year-old daughter was more delighted when this male koala showed up in their Bradbury backyard last week.

Campbelltown's koalas are on the move

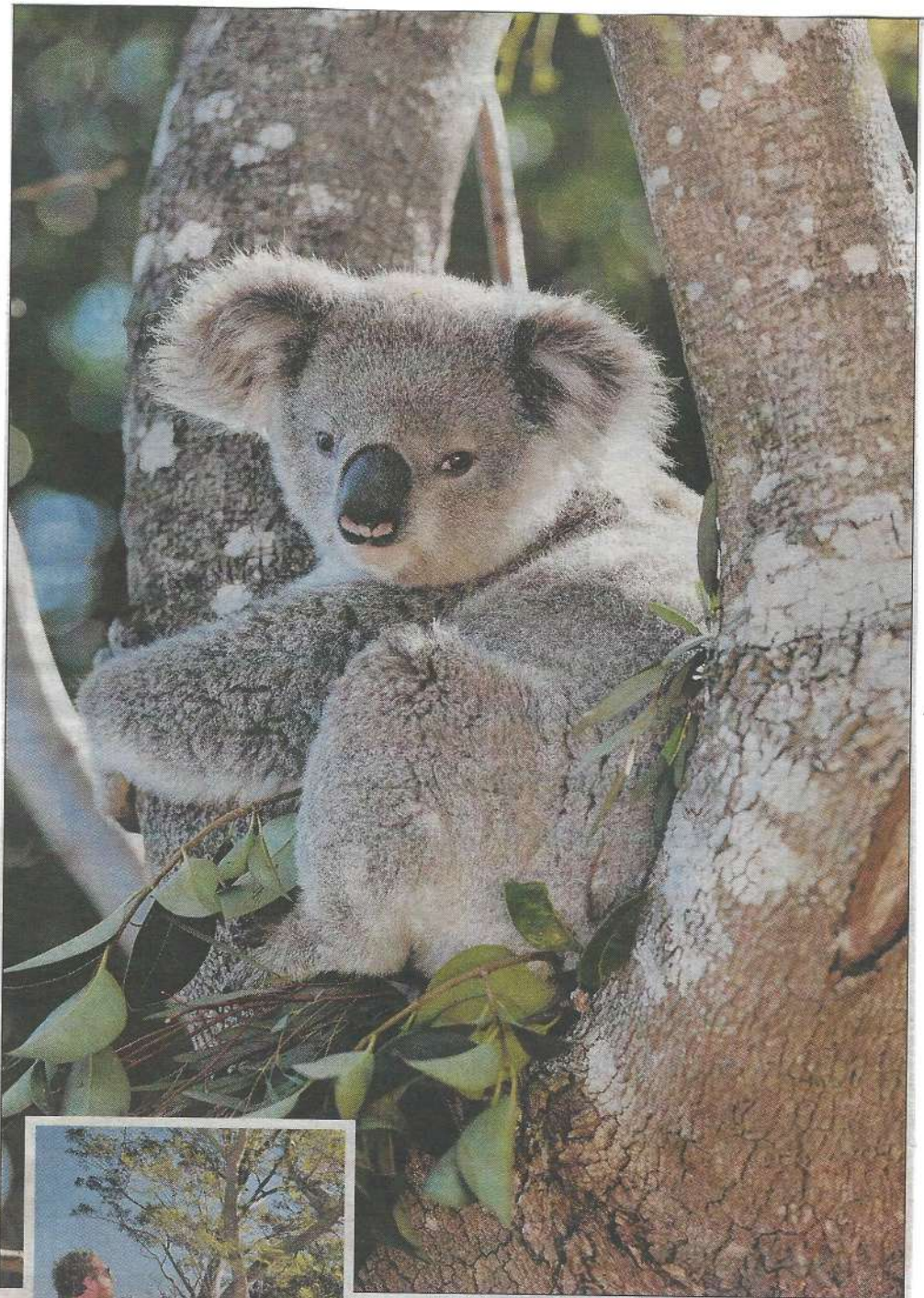
Motorists and residents are being urged to keep an eye out for koalas after three were spotted in as many days.

WIRES volunteer Cate Ryan said the marsupials had been spotted in Carrington Circuit and Angle Road in Leumeah last week. She warned residents who spot koalas in or near their backyards to keep their dogs tied up until volunteers could rescue it.

"Koalas are moving around quite a lot at this time of year so look out for them," she said.

Brendon Levot was shocked by an unanticipated visitor (pictured) when he took his morning coffee into his Bradbury backyard last Tuesday. The male koala had navigated his way to the Aminya Crescent backyard, using a narrow strip of trees between houses that snakes off Pinaroo Reserve.

Injured or distressed animals can be reported to the Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service: 1300 094 737, or wires.org.au.



Bradbury resident Brendan Levot received a warm welcome to the neighbourhood last Tuesday, when a cute and cuddly koala was found sitting in a tree in his backyard.

Picture: ROBERT POZO

Brendan wakes up to find national treasure

Kimberley Caines

BRADBURY resident Brendan Levot was surprised to wake up and find a koala sitting in his backyard tree this week.

"I walked outside, it was just on light, about 6am, and the koala was on his way up the tree when he was mobbed by the local birds," Mr Levot said. "Unfortunately for him, he climbed the

wrong tree (a white cedar) and there were no leaves, so he gave up and slumped himself down and went to sleep."

Mr Levot went to work and received a phone call from a neighbour about noon, when the koala was in the easement and heading towards Quirk Reserve.

"He created a ruckus among the neighbours' dogs. He was on his way to the

heart of Bradbury," Mr Levot said.

"I was surprised because he was a very active koala. Koalas spend most of their time sleeping in the day. They're nocturnal animals."

Meanwhile, a large male koala was killed when hit by a car in Junction Rd, Ruse, on Sunday.

The marsupial was taken to a veterinary hospital but did not survive.

5/8/14 mac chron



Picture: Jonathan Ng

Survivor of risky Appin Road

Koala Rosemeadow Rose (pictured) looks alert and happy perched on a tree branch, fussing protectively over the joey in her pouch.

Only the shaved patch on her right leg gives away the trauma she experienced when she was hit by two cars on Appin Road in Campbelltown earlier this month.

The marsupial escaped with a broken leg and her joey, who is about six-months-old and weighs just 260 grams, was not harmed. The pair were named for the suburb they were found in and Rose was the name of her rescuer.

She recovered from surgery at Sydney University's Avian Reptile and Exotic Pet Hospital and senior veterinarian Dr Hamish Brown said six koalas had been treated after being hit by cars this year – mostly on Appin Road.

Koala expert Dr Robert Close said each year about 100 joeys were produced by koalas who live in bushland along the Georges River from Macquarie Fields to Appin, and Appin Road accounted many deaths and injuries.

Anyone who finds an injured or distressed animal can contact NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service: 1300 094 737.

Mac Ad 30/7/14

'Project no danger to koalas'

By Katherine Fenech

CAMPBELLTOWN'S best-known koala expert has dismissed concerns that plans to carve up Kevin Wheatley and Smiths Creek reserves as part of the Airds urban renewal project would affect koalas living in the area.

Dr Robert Close has spent 25 years studying the marsupials and said between three and five female koalas live permanently in Smiths Creek Reserve.

"If, as planned, the corridor is planted with suitable trees such that koalas need only run a few metres to safety, then I consider that the renewal project will have little effect on the koalas of Smiths Creek Reserve," he said.

The Airds-Bradbury redevelopment

will see a mix of 2000 new private and social housing residences built in the suburb over the next 20 years.

It has raised the ire of residents' groups and Councillor Sue Dobson, who fear koalas will be affected.

She has called for the scrapping of plans to cut into Kevin Wheatley Reserve and said a "major koala corridor" should be built between Smiths Creek and Georges River reserves.

"We're talking about forests on the endangered list and we're talking about koalas that are disease free and breeding," Cr Dobson said.

Dr Close pinpoints domestic dogs as being the greatest threat to young koalas, who will begin migrating away from their mothers in search of their

own space in August.

"None of their options is safe as the reserve is surrounded by busy roads," he told the *Advertiser*.

"Any youngsters coming out of Smiths Creek have to run the gauntlet of cars and dogs. Perhaps one or two koalas will use the Smiths Creek corridor to cross Airds to the safety of the Georges River."

But residents' groups such as the Save Wildlife and Bushlands in Campbelltown Facebook group remain unconvinced. The group launched an online petition, addressed to Campbelltown MP Bryan Doyle, asking to "save our animals and the habitats that they call home".

It has so far garnered 1443 signatures.

AIRDS, BRADBURY

Calls to care for koalas

FEARS OVER DEVELOPMENT

Vera Bertola

*Mac Chron
5/8/14*

WITH construction fences going up along Georges River Rd to signal that work on the Airds-Bradbury Renewal Project is about to start, there have been renewed calls to ensure the koala colony in the area is adequately protected.

Campbelltown state Liberal MP Bryan Doyle said last week he was pleased to announce a win for the Campbelltown community as the suburb's redevelopment moved a step closer.

"The proposed Baden-Powell Reserve will increase in size by 80 per cent," Mr Doyle said. "It will retain the proposed landscaping and community improvements such as footpaths, tree planting and play equipment."

Australian Koala Foundation chief executive Debra Tabart said research showed an animal population within 2km of a major disturbance could result in extinction.

"I cannot believe that any koala scientist would not understand the impact of a large housing estate on an existing population or even koalas who traverse through," she said.

"Koalas are one step away from being endangered; we need to look at this (project) from the bigger picture."

She called for more help from custodians, the State and Federal Governments, to protect koalas.

"If (Airds-Bradbury re-

UNDER THREAT

POPULATION: There are only 2000 to 8000 koalas in the wild

STATUS: Although not officially classified as endangered, the population has dropped by 90 per cent in less than a decade

WHY: This is due to the destruction of the koala's natural habitat, a narrow crescent on the eastern coast of Australia

THREATS: Logging, agriculture and urban development

newal) is not a major disturbance, then what is?

"Every koala is (Environment Minister) Greg Hunt's responsibility. Who in his department rubberstamped this development?"

Mr Doyle met on Friday with the administrators of the Facebook page Help Save the Wildlife and Bushlands of Campbelltown.

Carla-Maree Simmons said he had assured the group the development was "koala-friendly". "We were all OK with what he said and we are hoping this is the case and not just another political lie," she said.

Campbelltown councillor Sue Dobson has a meeting with Planning Minister Pru Goward on Friday. Mayor Clinton Mead and general manager Paul Tosi will also attend. Cr Dobson said she would tell Ms Goward there needed to be greater protection of the area's wildlife.

AIRDS

Koala care still pressing

Macarthur Chronicle 22nd July 2014

Vera Bertola

AFTER another koala was spotted at Smiths Creek, Airds, on Thursday, former Campbelltown mayor Sue Dobson voiced disappointment that Premier Mike Baird had declined to meet her to discuss concerns about the Airds koala colony.

The independent councillor is worried the removal of open space in the Airds-Bradbury Renewal Project will adversely impact on koalas. She has been referred to Planning Minister Pru Goward for an early August meeting. "The Premier doesn't understand this issue is more than planning and needs to be addressed," Mrs Dobson said. "I will continue to press for a meeting."

A spokesman for the Premier said he received a significant number of requests and could not accept the invitation at this time. "Minister Pru Goward has carriage of this issue and she has agreed to a meeting to discuss the matter," the spokesman said.

Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) chief executive officer Deborah Tabart OAM said it was commonly accepted that any major impact within 2km of a koala breeding population would cause extinction.

She said the AKF, which had done the original koala mapping for Campbelltown, would be "delighted" to look at the site and could also look at the environmental impact statement for free. In a statement to the *Macarthur Chronicle* after an article published on July 8, retired koala expert Dr Robert Close said there were two corridors "in the regional vicinity".

"The most important one is along the Georges River," he said. "Some younger dispersing koalas wander into the Airds housing area toward Smiths Creek Reserve. "This is the only one (corridor) affected by the project and is likely to be used by far fewer koalas."



A koala spotted taking in the sun in Smiths Creek Reserve at Airds last Thursday.

Tarik Elmerhebe

CAMPBELLTOWN state Liberal MP Bryan Doyle believes koalas will be adequately accommodated in Airds as part of the suburb's redevelopment.

The *Macarthur Chronicle* contacted Mr Doyle after another koala was found in Airds last week - one of more than 300 believed to be in the Georges River area.

Conservationists and the community have called for the protection of wildlife corridors from the Dharawal National Park into the estate as part of the Airds Bradbury Renewal Project.

However, Mr Doyle said a 2011 study showed there was no koala corridor in Airds.

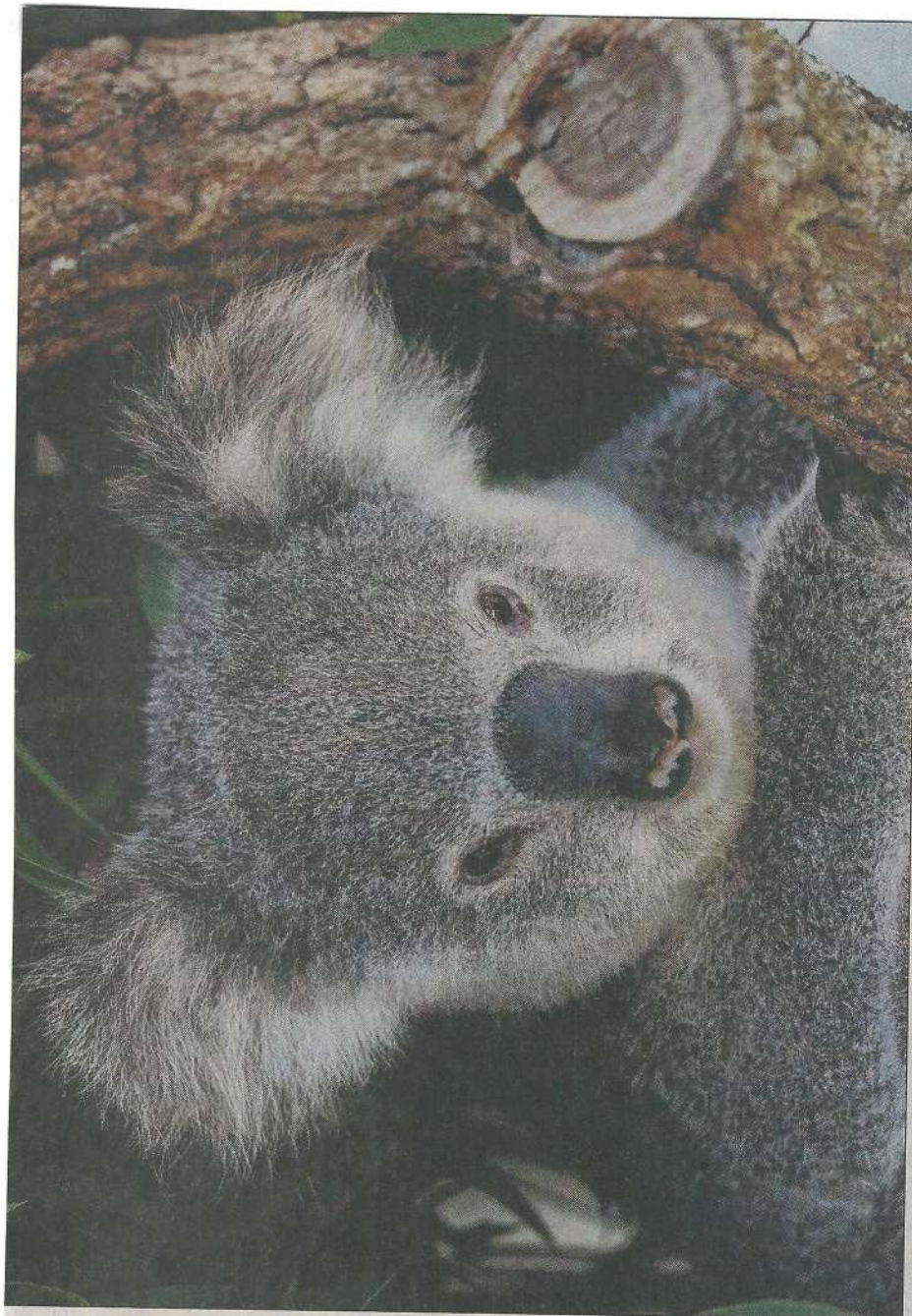
"The report concludes that there is no koala corridor through Airds and it does not constitute a core koala habitat," he said.

"The masterplan (for the renewal project) shows the koalas are adequately catered for, as approved by council. I am very eager to see scientific evidence (of a koala corridor) before the State Government makes decisions."

But Campbelltown independent Councillor Sue Dobson said the evidence of a koala corridor was clear.

"The *Chronicle* has reported on the existence of koalas in Airds loads of times and we've seen pictures of them there. What more evidence does Mr Doyle need?" she said.

Cr Dobson is urging Premier Mike Baird to reconsider the project's concept plan to retain open space for wildlife, including the koala colony. The young male koala,



George is lucky to be alive after he was hit by a car in Airds last week.

Picture: ROBERT POZO

STATE MP WANTS MORE EVIDENCE OF ANIMALS

named George, was found on Georges River Rd after being hit by a car.

Wildlife Information Rescue and Education Service volunteer Cate Ryan, who is caring for the injured koala, shared her concerns over the possible impact on wildlife corridors of the proposed development in Airds. "The proposal for a new road to go through the area where George was found will have an impact on the local koala population," she

said. "I'm concerned as the road will go directly through the koalas' major tracking route."

National Parks Association Macarthur branch member Beth Michie urged Mr Doyle to consider protecting the koala habitat.

"We know koalas are there. We see them all the time," she said. "I would like to see the areas kept as wildlife corridors. We should be protecting that area by making sure

that zoning is appropriate because, at the moment, the approach is very worrying," she said.

Retired University of Western Sydney koala researcher Dr Robert Close said Smiths Creek Reserve was a breeding ground for koalas. "There are currently about 10 koalas in the reserve and five of them are female."

"This means that they would be breeding in the Smiths Creek corridor."

"This means that they would be breeding in the Smiths Creek corridor."

RENEWAL PROJECT

WHAT: The Airds-Bradbury Renewal Project

AIM: To transform the original 1470 social housing homes into a sustainable mixed income community of more than 2000 homes, 70 per cent private and 30 per cent public housing

WHEN: Over the next 15-20 years

ANNOUNCED: November 2011

CONCERN: Wildlife corridors under threat

DETAILS: housing.nsw.gov.au

AIRDS
Koala

help

8/7/14
is on

MAC CREEK
hold

Macarthur Chronicle 8th July 2014

University joins fight to save koalas



By Scott Dougherty

CAMPBELLTOWN'S koalas will be among the main beneficiaries from a \$400,000 grant to establish a koala health hub at the University of Sydney's faculty of veterinary science.

The funds will support specialist clinical care for koalas at the Wildlife, Avian, Reptile and Exotic Pets Hospital at Camden.

Cuddly care: Dr Damien Higgins says the hub will provide koala carers with better access to tests and expertise.

"The three main health issues with koalas are chlamydia, dog attacks and being hit by cars," hub director Damien Higgins told the *Advertiser*.

"If locals come across a koala, the clinic will be there to help."

The cash comes from dormant funds originally collected in the 1980s by the Koala Park Sanctuary in West Pennant Hills.

"The koala health hub is dedicated to supporting veterinarians and researchers working to improve koala health and welfare,

koalas hospitalised in NSW each year," Dr Higgins said.

He said the university's investigations into the diagnosis and treatment of infectious koala diseases that can cause respiratory and neurological disease, blindness, infertility and death, as well as management of burns and trauma, have created new knowledge and diagnostic methods.

"This is a great opportunity to bring the research and expertise to the people who need it."

15/10/14



Koalas in streets

ANOTHER day, another koala sighting.

This photo was shot by Pat and Barry Durman along Minerva Road, Wedderburn.

Last week, Wildlife Information, Rescue and

Education Service (WIREs) volunteer Cate Ryan told the

Advertiser there was no shortage of the marsupials in local streets. "We have had a run on possums and koalas have been coming out of the woodwork every day," she said.

The influx of koalas caught Ms Ryan by surprise.

In September WIREs was called to rescue 50 of them from suburban streets and backyards. It has left Ms

Ryan and local koala expert Dr Rob Close scratching their heads. "Numbers are increasing and we don't know why," she said.

"We think it might be because the bushland hasn't had a lot of rain whereas around residential areas we water our gardens quite regularly and have nice leafy trees to attract them."

"And then there is the urban renewal [with large number of trees being demolished] at Airds."

Macarthur Advertiser 19th March 2014

6 - Camden-Narellan Advertiser, Wednesday, March 19, 2014

CDA 0006

News

■ New 'health hub' will be set up University joins fight for koalas

By Scott Dougherty

MACARTHUR'S koalas will be among the main beneficiaries of \$400,000 in funding to establish a Koala Health Hub at the University of Sydney's Faculty of Veterinary Science.

The funding will directly support continuing specialist clinical care for koalas at the Wildlife, Avian, Reptile and Exotic Pets Hospital at Camden.

"The three main health issues with koalas are chlamydia, dog attacks and being hit by cars," hub director Dr Damien Higgins told the *Advertiser*.

"If locals come across a koala, the Camden clinic will be there to help."

The funding for the hub is money contributed by members of the public in the 1980s, including bags of 5c coins from thousands of school children.

"The Koala Health Hub is dedicated to supporting koala hospitals, veterinarians and researchers working to improve koala health and welfare, including the 950 sick or injured koalas hospitalised in NSW each year," Dr Higgins said.

Dr Higgins said the university's investigations into the diagnosis and treatment of infectious koala diseases that could cause respirat-



Cuddly care: Dr Damien Higgins says the Koala Health Hub will provide koala carers with better access to tests and expertise.

ory and neurological disease, blindness, infertility and death, as well as management of burns and trauma, had created new knowledge and diagnostic methods.

There may be a hidden cost to our koala colonies, but . . .

Hazards to go on notorious road

McAd 19/3/14

The removal of trees could help mitigate the unforgiving nature of Appin Road. **Alicia Sylvester** reports.

ROADS and Maritime Services has identified hazardous trees it wants to remove in a bid to make Appin Road safer for motorists.

The recent safety report into the notorious road indicated the state government was investigating clearing hazards — namely trees — along the northern section of Appin Road, between Campbelltown and Appin.

This week, a transport for NSW spokesman said that independent investigation was now complete.

"Roads and Maritime Services is now working with an environmental expert to identify any ecologically sensitive areas along this corridor," the spokesman said.

"We expect this ecological assessment to be completed in coming months."

The spokesman could not confirm how many trees would be removed because the ecological assessment was still being done.

"When the studies are complete, stakeholder and community consultation will be carried out on any proposed removal of trees."

Campbelltown's koala expert Rob Close said there had been a major movement of young and old koalas across Appin Road as they tried to find new habitat.

He said widening the gap between the trees from one side of Appin Road to the other would increase the chances of koalas being hit.

"If the Campbelltown-to-Appin section is widened they're less likely to cross the road safely," he said.

Dr Close was also worried about the changes to drivers' attitudes after a safety upgrade.

"If the improvements on Appin Road mean cars are going faster — there's going to be an increase in koala road-kills."

The safety report identified mature trees as a problem on the section of the road between Campbelltown and Appin, stating "they are often located quite close to the travel lanes".

It stated most run-off-road crashes involved the vehicle hitting an object near the roadside, "most commonly a tree".

APPIN ROAD — CRASH CENTRAL



But learning to drive starts before you get a licence

THE release of the safety report into Appin Road doesn't end work to make it safer for motorists. Residents and MPs remember the five fatalities that occurred between 2009 and 2012 that led to the commissioning of the report by the Centre for Road Safety and Roads and Maritime Services.

While the government has tipped in \$100,000 for upgrading road signage and line markings in line with the report's recommendations, the RMS is investigating more ways to reduce risk to motorists. The report makes it clear any works depend on funding. Wollondilly MP Jai Rowell is committed to getting that funding.

"There have been some initial works but there'll be more to do and I'll advocate for getting those dollars," he said. Road-safety campaigner Eve Langham, of Buxton, believes a combination of road upgrades and better driver education, particularly for young people, is the key.

She lost her daughter Erin in 2002 to a car accident. "Upgrading our roads and making them safer is a priority but we should all drive to the conditions," she said.

"Even our older drivers don't get that message and they're supposed to be role models for younger drivers."

"I often see parents do the wrong thing with their kids in the car. Kids learn a lot about how to drive long before they get a licence."

ST HELENS PARK, AIRDS

Chronicle 11/12/13

Look out for our furry friends

RESIDENTS ON KOALA WATCH

Amanda Partridge

KOALA expert Rob Close has urged residents to exercise caution on the roads and report koala sightings to WIRES as the fluffy grey creatures continue to pop up in Campbelltown's residential areas.

WIRES carer Cate Ryan also urged community members not to touch koalas after one of the animals and its joey were removed from a St Helens Park building site last Monday afternoon.

The koala and joey made headlines after halting construction on a house being built at Heritage Way Close on Monday morning, as they sat atop the roof beams.

Ms Ryan said that later that day a person from another animal group had removed the koala and joey found at the site, but was quickly told to return the pair to the wild.

It was the third major koala sighting in suburban St Helens Park and Airds in the last month.



A koala and its joey halt construction at a St Helens Park building site (above, clockwise), Cate Ryan with orphaned Karri, and Pindari naps in an Airds tree.



Pictures: MELVYN KNIFE AND ROBERT POZO

Vital count to aid conservation

GRAB your walking shoes and smartphone and head out into the great outdoors for The Great Koala Count.

Running until November 17, the National Parks Association of NSW and Great Eastern Ranges initiative count urges people to register their details and download the "Biotag" app to lodge sightings. Recording sightings using the app will help paint a picture of koala distribution and assist with conservation. Register at alaccount.org.au and then download the Biotag app.

where and they end up in residential areas," he said.

Dr Close said people should exercise caution on roads near bushland to avoid running over koalas and be mindful of dogs in backyards which could attack wandering marsupials.

Ms Ryan said people should call WIRES immediately if they saw a koala. She said it was important to preserve local green space for the species, urging people to sign the petition to maintain open space which is being threatened by the Airds-Bradbury Renewal Project.

For a copy of the petition email crsuedobson@hotmail.com or call 0408 238 167.

Pindari the koala popped up in an Airds street on October 30, while orphaned nine-month-old Karri was found at St Helens Park on October 31.

Dr Close said the Campbelltown region was likely home to 300 koalas, many of which are reproducing.

"They have got to go some-

We've found our missing koala



"It's very good news because we didn't think he'd survive."

Cate Ryan, WIRES

By **Megan Gorrey**

GIVEN he was raised by a human, Pindari the koala's release into the wild was always going to be significant.

So when the mammal went missing weeks after he was transferred onto a tree in St Helens Park in May, those tracking his progress were naturally concerned.

Their fears were allayed when Pindari showed up in the branches of a gum tree at Airds last Wednesday.

The *Advertiser* has followed Pindari's progress since he was found in poor health near his dead mother's body in St Helens Park in July last year.

He was raised by St Andrews WIRES carer Cate Ryan, who was ecstatic he'd been found safe and healthy.

"He's gone in the opposite direction to what we thought he would and hoped he would," she said. "We thought he'd head down to Wedderburn."

Koala expert Robert Close said many spots along the Georges River had been taken by older koalas, forcing many younger animals into the suburbs.

Safe and sound: Campbelltown councillor Sue Dobson and WIRES carer Cate Ryan have been keeping their eye on Pindari the koala, shown here at Airds last week. He's now back in Ms Ryan's care and will be re-released near St Helens Park in coming weeks.

Picture: Jeff de Pasquale

CONTINUED PAGE 21

We've found our missing koala

FROM PAGE 5

6/11/13

"That means there's an increase in animals in backyards and across Appin Road which is a worry. It's a sign of a successful population but the downside of that is possible deaths. A two-edged sword."

Campbelltown councillor Sue Dobson said the discovery of Pindari highlighted her concerns over the Airds Bradbury Renewal Project.

Cr Dobson has lobbied the state government to retain parks and reserves in the renewal project, saying a loss of green space would be disastrous for the local koala population.

"Where else in Sydney do you find koalas in your front yard, your backyard or your local reserve?"

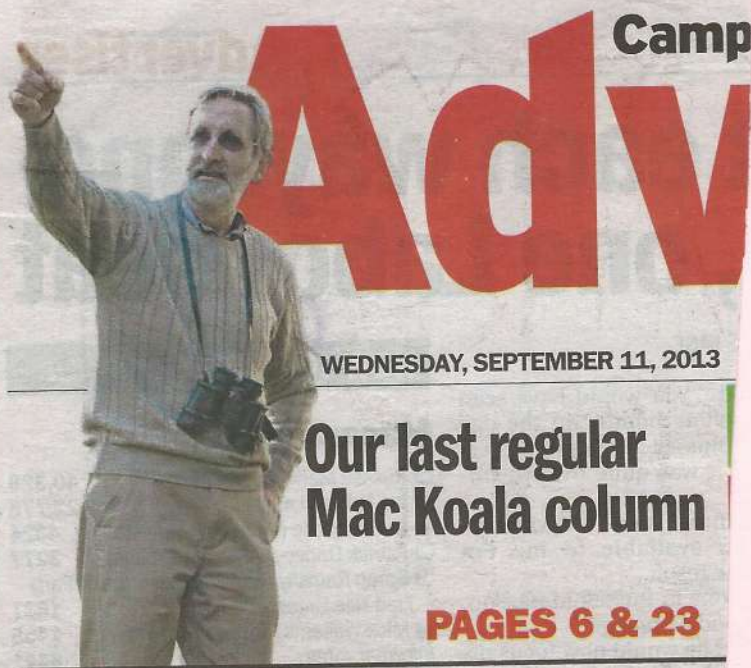


As a youngster: Pindari, last year when he was first being cared for by WIRES.

Cr Dobson has circulated a petition to save the suburb's reserves. "We're hoping to show the government the people of Campbelltown care about their parks, their

reserves and their koalas."

Ms Ryan agreed the development could be detrimental to koalas: "What are they *thinking*? It's ludicrous. We're going to end up with roadkill."



A fond farewell with our last column

11/9/2013

By **Dr Robert Close**

THIS is the last regular Mac Koala column, although I will still give occasional updates.

I warmly thank the many people who have reported sightings and those who have helped with capture and radio-tracking.

Lynn Bowden has played a major part in the research as have Wendy and Mick Fares, Kieran Griffin and Mariette Ennik. It's been a great pleasure to have met so many friendly people during the course of the research.

When we started our research in 1990 the only known local koalas were from Wedderburn.

Our first aim was to survey habitat by methodically searching for scratch marks and faecal pellets. Our second aim was to investigate koala health, particularly chlamydiosis, in collaboration with the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute.

No clinical signs of the disease have been discovered to this day.

The health aspect of our study is now run by the Centre for Wildlife Health and Conservation at Cobbitty.

Next we obtained funding to start a radio-tracking study to investigate

home-range size, diet, longevity, dispersal, causes of mortality and reproductive capacity.

To obtain data, however, we had to find the rare koalas.

So we requested help from the community via the *Advertiser* in October 1990.

This request was successful three days later with the first sighting in Kentlyn. It was also the start of a long and fruitful collaboration between UWS, the *Advertiser* and the community.

Our community liaison became much more efficient with the development of the Mac Koala club in October 1995 and the arrival of PhD student Steven Ward whose scholarship was half paid by the *Advertiser*.

This led to a pager system, to the weekly Mac Koala column and to the council-erected koala-crossing signs which also publicised the pager number.

After Steven graduated, Tristan Lee worked on the project, specialising in DNA studies.

He recently was able to submit his thesis.

Here's a summary of our general results.

■ The population is healthy and

MAC KOALA



Left: A map by Robert Close showing local koala sightings (yellow dots) over the lifetime of this column.

they can use very narrow corridors, such as the one that links Cook Reserve and James Ruse Reserve.

■ As the koala population increases more and more animals will appear in household gardens and these will usually move during the night so they should not be disturbed.

■ Over 3000 community sightings have been recorded, 167 koalas have been ear-tagged and 17 have been radio-tracked. Of that total 57 males and 53 females are less than 15 and may still be alive.

So we will continue to ask the community to report koalas, especially those with ear-tags, by emailing me directly.

Thank you, again, for your enthusiastic support.

Report koala sightings:
r.close@uws.edu.au.
If you see an injured koala: Cate Ryan, WIRES, 0415 957 383.

extends east across the Holsworthy firing range and south to Appin but is in danger from the arrival of Chlamydia-carrying southern koalas.

■ Females occupy home ranges of 10 hectares to 20 hectares and once established generally live to an average age of 15.

■ Young animals may travel many kilometres in search of a suitable home range and during dispersal they are vulnerable to dogs and cars.

■ They can live and breed in urban reserves, such as Smiths Creek, and

Bush battle won against the odds

A SPECIAL plaque was unveiled at the entrance to Campbelltown's Dharawal National Park on Friday, honouring the hard-fought campaign from 1988-1994 to save the Wedderburn koalas.

From that core habitat, the marsupials have now spread across our city and are being found in schools, streets and backyards in suburbs as far apart as Rosemeadow and Macquarie Fields.

In 1988 an Indonesian developer, Yap Yan Pin, attempted to build a housing estate on the original habitat, only to be met by a wall of local opposition.

The battle lasted years, involved protests, picket lines, courtrooms and police, and won the crucial support of the union movement which declared a "green ban" on the site — the longest in the nation's history.

That original battleground is now a key part of our national park.

Mayor Sue Dobson — who was a leader of the community protest movement two decades ago — proudly unveiled the plaque in the front of a small crowd of old campaigners.

"We fought long and hard to save this site,

and our victory was due, in most part, to our conviction that this site was simply too precious and must be protected," Cr Dobson said.

"I would like to honour all of those involved in the conservation of O'Hares Creek Gorge, and for securing its preservation for future generations."

Those listed on the plaque include, broadly, all community members and environmentalists involved in the struggle, as well as union officials Paul Matters, Jimmy Avinou, Ian Moggridge, Sid Vaughn and Don McDonald, local UWS scientist Dr Robert Close, and Campbelltown journalists Jeff McGill (the *Advertiser*) and Eric Kontos (then-editor of the *Chronicle*) who had spearheaded the media campaign.

Cr Dobson said the plaque will be a permanent reminder, and added: "We fought like warriors against great odds, and thanks to your involvement, this site will remain untouched by urban development."



Remembering the fight:

Mayor Sue Dobson unveiling the plaque at the entrance to Wedderburn's Dharawal National Park with former union officials Ian Moggridge and Jimmy Avinou.



Incredible legacy: Dr Robert Close scanning the treetops for our famous local marsupials, now found in backyards across Campbelltown.

11/9/2013

Our last 'Mac Koala' column — a huge thank-you to Rob Close

Comment by editor **Jeff McGill**

It has been a great koala-berative effort lasting two decades.

But local koala expert Dr Robert Close has decided to retire from his popular weekly column, 'Mac Koala', which has kept readers up to date with all the latest news, sightings and controversies.

He will still give us occasional updates and insights and keep his eyes on his beloved marsupials — but without his weekly workload.

It feels like the end of the era, and we offer him our deepest thanks.

I've worked with Rob since the late 1980s, trekked the bush with him, fought the same causes and even helped hold his safety nets when he was climbing high into the treetops to check koalas for disease and fit them with radio transmitters to track their movements.

I am particularly proud that the *Advertiser* not only backed, but helped pay for, his early koala studies with the University of Western Sydney.

His weekly columns over the years have created an easy-to-read treasure of scientific insights that would be the envy of any community.

He has highlighted the importance of wildlife corridors for not only survival of the local animals but as a way to maintain genetic diversity.

In short, without Rob we wouldn't know a tiny fraction of what we do. He is one of Campbelltown's living treasures and deserves our thanks.

THE LAST COLUMN PAGE 23



A koala is stopped from running on to a busy street in Airds.



This little koala was found in Harry Mortimer's Airds property.



A young Koala is captured behind the Riverside Inn, Airds.

Robert Close catches a koala in Airds so it can be relocated to bush.



Koalas' care is a priority

Macarthur Chronicle 27th August 2013

MAYOR TO SAVE OPEN SPACES

Peter Way

CAMPBELLTOWN Mayor Sue Dobson has vowed to continue her fight to protect the city's thriving koala colony and preserve open space in the Airds redevelopment.

Campbelltown state Liberal MP Bryan Doyle accused the independent councillor of delaying the redevelopment of the public housing estate on Channel Nine's *A Current Affair* last week, describing her as "bloody-minded".

Airds was portrayed as a ghost town because of Cr Dobson's campaign to protect koala habitat.

Cr Dobson said she was completely supportive of the redevelopment of Airds into a mix of private and public housing, but wants open space protected for the community and the koala colony.

"I've always supported the redevelopment but leave the parks and reserves alone," she said.

"I started the redevelopment. For anyone to insinuate that I don't support the redevelopment is rubbish."

University of Western Sydney koala researcher Robert Close said he was inundated with koala sightings. "I'm getting a dozen calls a week and numbers are increasing we believe," Dr Close said. "It's good living all around Campbelltown for koalas and the population can double very

FUTURE PLANS

WHAT: The Airds Bradbury Renewal Project involves transforming the original 1460 public housing properties into a mixed income estate of more than 2000 homes

MIX: 70 per cent private and 30 per cent public housing

WHEN: Project expected to take 15-20 years, according to Housing NSW

WHY: To address the urban decay of the estates and transfer it into a vibrant community

CONCERN: Lack of open space

quickly over a period of five years."

St Helens Park's Phil Ditchburn was surprised to find a koala asleep in his backyard last week. "I was having breakfast and I saw a big grey fuzzi-ball curled up in the tree," he said.

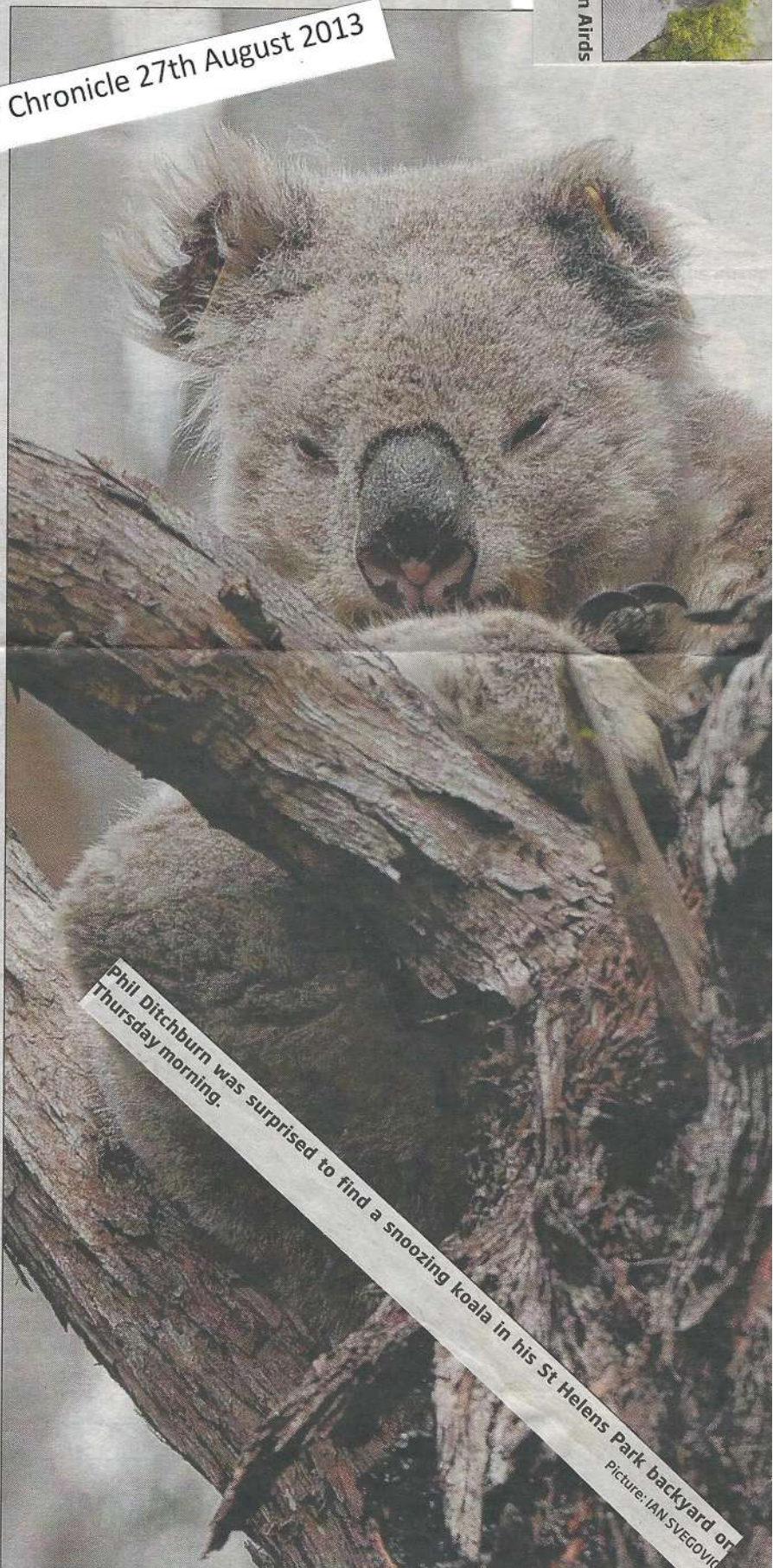
The sighting is one of many from Ruse, Airds, Kentlyn and St Helens Park reported in the *Chronicle* in the past five years.

Mr Doyle said everybody loved koalas but he did not believe the Airds redevelopment project will have an impact on the environment.

"This project is good for the community and the environment," he said.

"The impact is to delay and cause uncertainty with the project, which impacts local businesses and shops."

■ Editorial: page 31



Phil Ditchburn was surprised to find a snoozing koala in his St Helens Park backyard on Thursday morning.
Picture: IAN SVEGOVIC

■ Most people agree Airds needs a major facelift; but is bulldozing its trees and parks the answer?

'BAD DEAL'

Mayor Sue Dobson has called on Premier Barry O'Farrell — as the Minister for Western Sydney — to step in personally and reconsider the Airds renewal project. **Megan Gorrey** reports.

A PLAN to revitalise Airds will come at the cost of much of the suburb's green space — and Campbelltown mayor Sue Dobson says it's a land swap that rips off local ratepayers.

"It's a roft," Cr Dobson said.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I think they'd come in and take our parks and sports fields."

Under the current concept plan for the Airds-Bradbury Renewal Project, large parcels of public land — including Kevin Wheatley Reserve, Brindley Park, Dorchester Park and Baden Powell Reserve — would be swallowed up by rooftops.

In return, UrbanGrowth NSW, formerly known as Landcom, would shift Kevin Wheatley Reserve's sports fields to a smaller, swampy piece of land behind the current Riverside Drive shopping centre. That piece of land contains protected Cumberland Plain woodland and is a critical koala corridor which connects Smiths Creek Reserve to the Georges River.

A proposed extension of Campbellfield Avenue, which would require several houses to be demolished, would also slice through the reserve.

"I've always thought they would develop their own land and leave our reserves alone," Cr Dobson said.

"But this is a grab for cash. They're using our parks, sports fields and recreational facilities to profit. Where



Bad deal: Mayor Sue Dobson is standing firm against what she calls a "land grab" in Airds which will see the sports fields currently at Kevin Wheatley Reserve moved to this smaller, swampy parcel of land that is also used as a corridor by koalas.

Picture: Jonathan Ng



Less green space: Simplified maps prepared by the Advertiser showing (at left) the open space areas, in green, found on the existing map of Airds — and (at right) the smaller areas of parks and reserves marked on redevelopment plans.

else would this happen in Sydney?"

Now Cr Dobson has called on Premier Barry O'Farrell to intervene.

"The land belongs to the ratepayers of Campbelltown," she said. "No one asked the ratepayers of Campbelltown if they were willing to give it up."

Housing NSW finalised the current

concept plan for the public housing estate (which Campbelltown Council assessed) and Planning Minister Brad Hazzard approved it in August 2012.

Cr Dobson argued they didn't know what they were signing off on.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

Has anybody seen Pindari?

By Scott Dougherty

FORGET *Where's Wally?* — where's Pindari?

Earlier this month, the two-year-old koala became the first hand-raised koala released back into the wild in Sydney — but we don't know his position, or his health, after his radio collar failed.

There are fears he won't be able to defend himself against dogs or know the danger of roads, with local carers and experts now not knowing if he is heading towards danger.

"A collar failing has only happened with us once before," said koala expert Robert Close, an *Advertiser* columnist. "It's very frustrating it's happened with Pindari. He's going to be very vulnerable near roads and near dogs in backyards."

He was released in St Helens Park and was last seen heading south, likely crossing Wedderburn Road near the gorge at any moment. "He could've gone a kilometre or so by now," Dr Close said. "When the collar was working the furthest he went was 150 metres overnight."

This newspaper has followed Pindari's progress since he was found in poor health not far from



his dead mother's body in St Helens Park bushland last July. He was raised by St Andrews WIRES carer Cate Ryan.

Dr Close said young koalas liked to travel near roads as it was easier for them than harsh bushland. Pindari can be recognised by his individually coloured ear-tags.

Report sightings to Robert Close, 0407 408 149.

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29/5/13

Macarthur Advertiser 29th May 2013

Macarthur Advertiser 10th July 2013

Where's Pindari?

St Helens Park residents have been urged to keep their eyes peeled for Pindari the koala in the trees above their homes.

There's still been no sign of the young mammal, who was released into bushland last month.

Anyone who sees him is encouraged to take a photo showing his green and yellow ear tags, and contact koala expert Dr Robert Close on UWS pager 9962 9996.

Macarthur Advertiser 24th April 2013

Vincent seemed fitting name

24/4/13

Too many for ear-tag team

By Dr Robert Close

IN THE most recent column, I discussed the ear-tagging system, and how we use it to plot movements of koalas around the district.

As a result of the increased numbers of koalas in the district, the task of tagging every animal that is reported to us via the koala pager has become too large for our catching team.

We are now tagging only those animals that are rescued from dangerous situations.

There are other ways of identifying koalas that don't require ear-tags.

A good example arose recently when a koala appeared (pictured) on Georges River Road with a semi-circular piece, the size of a 10 cent

MAC KOALA



coin, cut neatly out of its left ear.

Assuming that it's a male, we'll obviously have to call him "Vincent", in honour of Van Gogh. The most likely cause of his wound is fighting.

Koalas have very sharp incisors, as I've discovered on many occasions

and I carry scars inflicted through heavy welding gloves.

However, the bite is narrow and unless the ear tore in an unusual manner, I would have expected more of a U-shaped tear.

Vincent also has a distinctive pattern of black and pink skin around the nostrils at the base of his black nose pad.

In other koalas the pattern can range from all black to quite unusual designs in pink.

At one stage we started setting up a register of nasal patterns.

One koala that recently had ear-tags fitted was Pindari, the young koala that has been in WIRES care since his

mother died of cancer in July 2012.

He now weighs more than five kilograms and is ready for release, but whenever we've set a date weather conditions have been either too hot, windy or wet.

Because he has spent the last eight months in a spacious cage he has been spared having to deal with harsh conditions.

Consequently, we want to release him in optimal conditions.

I hope to report his successful release soon.

Pindari shows signs of being clever: Cate Ryan, his carer, has noticed that Pindari takes the branches cut for his food and uses them to construct a kind of "nest" on which he then sits.

I've never before heard of such behaviour.

Let's hope he doesn't try building one in windy conditions on release.

Please report all koala sightings on the UWS pager 996 29996.

News

Platypus makes a big splash

FROM PAGE 1

A local resident saw a platypus in a large pool in the river just east of Campbelltown earlier this month.

Ms Brookes believes she saw the same platypus when she went looking in the secluded spot a couple of weeks later.

Local koala expert Robert Close said the sightings were very encouraging, especially after two dead platypuses were found in the waterway last October and November.

"To have three separate sightings is terrific," he said.

Platypus expert Tom Grant said the sightings indicated that part of the river was in the animal's home range.

"The fact they're seeing it all the time suggests it's not just passing through," Dr Grant said.

"It would indicate they're either there in greater numbers or they've changed their behaviours. It might be a combination of both, but it's cheering."

Platypus sightings can be reported to the University of Western Sydney pager, 9962 9996, or tell us at macarthuradvertiser.com.au.

Rock pelting prompts rescue Koalas move close to town

MACMA 26/9/12

By Alexandra Pfeiffer

A YOUNG koala created a stir on Thursday when it was spotted up a tree near Airds shops.

University of Western Sydney koala expert and *Advertiser* columnist Robert Close said he had seen two koalas in the Airds bushland the day before, probably because of fires near the Georges River.

Dr Close said it was important that the state government's redevelopment of the Airds Bradbury housing commission area over the next 20 years take into account these furry residents.

"Any renewal needs corridors that allow the animal to walk across from the Georges River into Smiths Creek," Dr Close said.

"Smiths Creek is very important in terms of animals moving across the city and where Smiths Creek starts is actually by the Airds pub there [near where the koala was found]."

A Department of Finance and Services spokesman said the concept plan for the Airds Bradbury redevelopment achieved a balance between

urban renewal and protecting areas for local koalas.

"The known koala population within the Georges River escarpment and O'Hares Creek extends to the north and south and will not be affected by the Airds Bradbury urban renewal project," he said.

"The plan includes the retention of a riparian corridor along Smiths Creek into areas of Cumberland Plain woodland containing the koalas' key eucalypt species.

"Offsets in the project conserve higher quality koala habitat adjoining Georges River."

Dr Close said it was also up to residents to leave koalas alone and not abuse or hurt them.

He said at first he had left the small koala in the car park near Airds shops on Thursday, but decided to capture it in the afternoon when a group of students started throwing rocks at it.

It was later released beside the Georges River.

To report koala sightings, phone the UWS pager on 9962 9996.

MAC KOALA COLUMN PAGE 34



Car park climber: The small koala in Airds last week. University of Western Sydney koala expert Robert Close said he couldn't tell what sex the animal was, but it looked young. **Picture:** Jonathan Ng

You've heard of the Big Banana, Big Pineapple and Big Merino — is Campbelltown about to get a . . .

Mina 30/5/12

By Alexandra Pfeffer

CAMPBELLTOWN could soon be home to the world's largest koala.

But would it become an iconic tourist destination like the Big Banana at Coffs Harbour, or as kitsch and widely-mocked as the Big Ned Kelly at Glenrowan?

Campbelltown councillor Sue Dobson will propose the construction of a Big Koala somewhere in Campbelltown in a notice of motion to the council in July.

She said the giant marsupial would put Campbelltown on the international tourism map and highlight the need to preserve our koala colonies.

"The tourism opportunity is endless," said Cr Dobson, who helped lead the fight to save local koalas from developers in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

"Tourists will come from Japan, they'll come from America."

Cr Dobson said she was keen to hear residents' thoughts on what the location and size of the koala should be.

"I'd say at least as big as the Big Pineapple, if not bigger," she said. "The Big Banana's on a banana plantation, the Big Pineapple's on a pineapple plantation . . . [the Big Koala] could be in the form of a research centre, it could be in the form of a tourist educational centre."

She said she hoped Campbelltown businesses would help create the new attraction as it would bring potential customers to the area.

But UWS koala expert Robert Close said money would be better spent on Campbelltown's real-life koalas.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

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BIG KOALA



Surely we can do better than this: At least two "big koalas" already exist in Victoria - near Cowes and Stawell - but Cr Dobson thinks Campbelltown can create a stylish art landmark that draws tourism dollars.

The stars of the show

- Campbelltown originally had plenty of koalas, but records indicate most of them had been shot for their pelts by the early 20th century.
- Before their rediscovery at Wedderburn in 1986, koalas had not been seen locally for about 50 years.
- A community campaign to save the Wedderburn colony from developers was won in the 1990s, and the Dharawal National Park now encompasses that core habitat site.
- Campbelltown's koalas have now spread across the eastern edge of our city and they are regularly spotted next to major roads, in schoolyards, and even in suburban backyards.

Protect koalas, forget runway

A KOALA was spotted in Tahmoor this week, a stone's throw away from the site of a proposed second Sydney airport in Wilton.

But yesterday, the federal government confirmed Wilton as the preferred site for the new runway.

Last week, the *Advertiser* reported that Wilton's koala population could pose a threat to airport plans following the federal government's decision to list koalas as vulnerable in NSW.

University of Western Sydney koala expert Robert Close said that based on his studies of Campbelltown koalas, he expected there were big numbers of koalas in Wilton. Dr Close said they had found female koalas around Wilton, which indicated it was a breeding area.

"They [female koalas] settle into an area, so while you've got them breeding you're pretty sure there's going to be a



Koala country: Robert Close, scanning the treetops, expects big numbers of koalas in Wilton. **Picture:** Jonathan Ng

stable base somewhere around the place," he said.

Dr Close said the area was home to an array of creatures and the government might also find squirrel gliders — also listed as vulnerable — other gliders,

wallaroos, swamp wallabies, smaller wallabies, brush-tailed rock wallabies, bandicoots and birds.

Dr Close said putting an airport in the middle of a koala breeding area would destroy it and, if putting it

"This is very similar land to Dharawal National Park. I can't see it stacking up in relation to environmental impacts," he said.

9/5/12

MAC KOALA PAGE 29

nearby, precautions would still need to be taken to protect travelling males.

Macarthur MP Russell Matheson said that he couldn't see how Wilton could pass an environmental study for an airport development.

Macarthur Advertiser 9th May 2012

Macarthur Advertiser 25th June 2012

MAC CHAT



25/6/12

Gang up at school

Kentlyn Public School is well-known for the way it has lovingly welcomed the koalas that are so often spotted in its grounds.

Maybe the word is spreading through the animal kingdom.

Principal June Thompson has sent local koala expert Rob Close this photo of a Gang-gang cockatoo that has also made himself at home at the school lately. See this week's Mac Koala column on page 19 for all the latest details.

Some online feedback

It has been a well-known fact for years that Wilton has been home to koala families. As someone who was born and bred on the catchment, I have seen many in the proposed site and surrounds. **Jacqui Clark**

IS THIS the same Wilton that the NSW Government says can't have an airport because of the huge housing estates planned for there? It's all very political from the local Liberal state members.

Roy Marshall

IF THERE is a considerable habitat of koalas there then I'll change my mind about the Wilton option and go against it. If it wasn't for this it would've been a really great location!

Timothy, Liverpool

I SUPPORT the animals but anybody who will now use koalas as a weapon and guise against the Wilton airport is just mean-spirited and lacks integrity.

Dennis says

I LIVE in Wilton and can say the koala reports are true. I was travelling on a road and had to slow down for an old dog walking on the side of a main road but on closer inspection it was a mother koala with a baby on her back. Regardless of an airport or more housing, large areas of national park will need to be put aside to protect these animals and the catchment water.

SharonKarma

BECAUSE the koalas are now being used in the argument some people think it's unfair. Unbelievable. Let's leave them out of the argument and have the bush torn down and koalas nowhere to live — would you prefer that? Every single piece of ammunition we can get to stop the airport is welcome. **Brad**

AN AIRPORT is going to create lots and lots and lots of new jobs for all of Sydney, and Wollongong, too!

David, Sydney

AIRPORT NOW OFFICIAL

The federal government yesterday confirmed Macarthur as the preferred site for a second Sydney airport - will our koalas be enough to stop it?

Scanning the treetops for koalas, Dr Robert Close says a major ecological investigation into the Wilton site is needed. Picture: Jonathan Ng



By Alexandra Pfeffer and Kerrie Armstrong

WILTON has been confirmed as the preferred site for a second Sydney airport by federal Transport Minister Anthony Albanese.

It was expected that funding would be announced in last night's budget to cover studies into the environmental, economic and social impact the airport would have on the surrounding areas.

"Following this work, the government will determine how Sydney's long-term aviation

needs should be met," Mr Albanese said yesterday.

Which means Wilton's koalas — newly-protected as "vulnerable" by the same federal government that is proposing the airport — could become major players in the debate.

Koala expert and *Advertiser* columnist Dr Robert Close said the Wilton area also looks likely to be home to an array of wildlife such as squirrel gliders (also listed as vulnerable), wallabies, bandicoots and birds.

FULL REPORT AND FEEDBACK PAGE 5



KOALAS WAIRPORT

■ The Gillard government has given koalas a new 'protected' status — but how protected will they be if an airport runway is built over them at Wilton?

By Alexandra Pleffer

THEY may be asleep most of the time, but koalas could become Macarthur's secret weapon in the battle to stop Wilton becoming a second Sydney airport.

On Monday, the federal government listed koalas as vulnerable in NSW, Queensland and the ACT — allowing the government to intervene in development plans that would affect koala habitat.

University of Western Sydney koala expert and *Advertiser* columnist Robert Close said this put the government in a very strange predicament if it decided to bulldoze koala territory in Wilton to make way for a giant runway.

Campbelltown's famous koala colony is expanding south and koalas are now dotted throughout Douglas Park — and Wilton.

The same Wilton where the federal

"The [government has] given themselves a bit of a headache there."

Koala expert Robert Close.

"Long live the koalas."

— Wollondilly mayor Col Mitchell

government is considering establishing an airport.

"They've given themselves a bit of a headache there," Dr Close said.

"We don't know how big the koala population is there but we've collected quite a few dead ones from the Wilton area because that's mainly where we get our reports from, when people have run over them.

"We know they're in the Wilton area, so if (the government) plans to do any development they'll have to do a big survey."

Wollondilly mayor Col Mitchell said he believed a population of koalas could help deter airport plans, just as other NSW development plans had been halted by vulnerable species.

"Long live the koalas," Cr Mitchell told the *Advertiser* on Monday.

"That's another reason why the airport shouldn't be put there.

"It's catchment area, so it's environmentally sensitive there anyway."

Wollondilly state MP Jai Rowell said there were many environmental concerns about putting an airport at Wilton and he was keen to get more information from Dr Close about the importance of the area for local koala colonies.

Macarthur Advertiser 2nd May 2012



Joint Macarthur effort

WOLLONDILLY Council will hold a "No Airport at Wilton" rally on Saturday, June 16.

The council is also seeking any interested parties from Campbelltown to join its action group opposing the airport investigation.

Wollondilly mayor Col Mitchell said: "People are keen to be involved and the community is very actively opposed to this unwelcome proposal. The airport issue is not going away and we need to work as a strong united force to protect our way of life and environment."

Wollondilly Council deputy general manager Luke Johnson will release a "position paper" listing the council's concerns about the Wilton site in the coming weeks. A consultant was engaged to assist with the council's campaign.

Details: To register in the c...

'Vulnerable' for how long?

ON Monday, the federal government listed NSW koalas as "vulnerable" — but it's not yet known how this status will affect developers' plans near Campbelltown's koala colonies.

Environment Minister Tony Burke said habitat loss and urban expansion were a big threat to koala populations and proposals likely to have an impact on koalas would now be assessed under national environmental law. "If someone wants to make a development, there is a tougher hurdle as a result of a species being endangered," Mr Burke said in an *Australian Financial Review* article yesterday.

But UWS koala expert Robert Close said he didn't yet know how this would affect developments in areas used by our local koalas. "Just being able to say that it's labelled as vulnerable in federal legislation is power in itself," Dr Close said. "But I'm not sure how it's going to affect us in NSW because we've already got vulnerable status at a state level."

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

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What a view: The first tour group of Advertiser readers at the O'Hares Creek gorge in Wedderburn. Picture: Jeff McGill

Flattering feedback

"I was very surprised that such an idyllic location is on the doorstep of Campbelltown!"
 That comment, from Hermione Reynolds, of Bradbury, was fairly typical of the reaction from this first group of Advertiser readers given a sneak peek of our stunning new Dharawal National Park on the weekend.
 They were guided out to the O'Hares Creek gorge by Pat and Barry Durman and other volunteers from the Macarthur branch of the National Parks Association.

Macarthur Advertiser 2nd May 2012

Koala versus airport battle looms

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

"It goes to show that this is not the best site," Cr Rowell said.
 "The fact that a member of the community like Dr Close is saying that there's an impact on koalas there goes to show that (Transport Minister Anthony) Albanese probably hasn't even had relevant studies done."
 Environment Minister Tony Burke wouldn't say whether the

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new protection status for koalas would affect his government's airport plans for Wilton.
 "I am absolutely determined that we protect this iconic Australian animal," Mr Burke said.
 "However, this doesn't mean that developments won't be able to go ahead. This listing simply

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information about Aboriginal culture, environmental displays and children's activities, including face painting. Food and drink will also be available.
 It will be the first public event held at the national park since it was declared by the O'Farrell government at the end of March.
 The park is in the upper catchment of the Georges River.
 The government has outlined plans for picnic tables and a toilet at the Wedderburn end of the park, a wheelchair-accessible walking track to a lookout over O'Hares Creek gorge and a walking track to Minerva Pool.

Details: Visit wildworld.com.au/dharawal or phone 1300 361 967.

Keep an eye out for sickly fella

2/5/12
 KOALA expert Robert Close wants locals to keep an eye out for this poor little tree dweller.

It was photographed by residents Stephen and Catherine Grenfell

while bush-walking at St Helens Park. Dr Close is concerned and said the animal is obviously suffering. "It is skinny, with a brown, bedraggled coat and some



kind of growth on its foot. We would like to examine this animal more closely so I ask residents walking near the Lynwood Park soccer grounds to keep a watch for it. It is likely to be close to the ground."

Report all koala sightings to the UWS koala pager 9962 9996.

MAC KOALA PAGE 30

Scott's Corner

From Paul Wakeling Motor Group Managing Director, Scott Wakeling

mead 2/5/12

Long battle to save koalas

NSW koalas are now classified as vulnerable under a protected listing announced by the government this week. But Campbelltown already has a strong record of protecting its own. **Jeff McGill** reports.

FOR two decades Campbelltown people have been on the front line — literally — of koala protection.

Yet standing in front of bulldozers was only part of the story.

In the 1980s the local branch of the National Parks Association discovered koalas at Wedderburn, on the edge of O'Hares Creek gorge.

This caused great excitement because the marsupials hadn't been seen locally for about half a century and were thought to be extinct.

But it wouldn't be easy to protect and nurture them.

Campbelltown Council had already, unknowingly, approved a housing estate on the same Wedderburn bushland site.

In 1988, the developer, Indonesian-based Yap Yan Pin, moved ahead with plans to build.

The council begged premier Nick Greiner to intervene. He refused. And the battle began.

The NPA led protests and the unfolding drama was covered in detail by the *Advertiser*. When a protest rally was held at Mawson Park it was dominated by family groups and school children.

Public petitions were collected, debates raged in State Parliament and the CSIRO studied the site.

But in 1989, koala campaigners got their most influential scientific ally — Robert Close, of the University of Western Sydney.

Dr Close began an exhaustive research program, checking koalas for diseases and fitting them with tiny radio transmitters to accurately confirm their eating patterns and corridors of travel.

The *Advertiser* launched a weekly koala column — still going strong — and helped financially back the studies of Dr Close

and his assistants, PhD students Stephen Ward and Tristan Lee.

Yap Yan Pin took legal action against Campbelltown Council in the NSW Land and Environment Court — and it won, in May 1990.

Enter a new champion of the koalas — the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Electrical Union, rallied by campaigner Sue Dobson (now a councillor).

The union placed a green ban on the Wedderburn site preventing construction work. It would later win a National Trust award for this vital action.

The stalemate continued until January 1991, when Yap Yan Pin moved in with non-union contractors. Protesters and bulldozers came face to face.

The problem was, the protesters were not radical green warriors; they were mums and dads, politicians, retired

folk, even kids. So when the police moved them aside, complete with heartfelt apologies, there was no need for tear gas or riot shields.

The developer then built a sealed road into the site and to even the most hardened campaigners it seemed as if the battle to save the koalas had been lost.

That is why it was considered a miracle when, just a week later, Yap Yan Pin was forced into receivership after the Australian Taxation Office took action over unpaid taxes and penalties.

The site fell into the hands of a Singapore bank which had no real interest in the controversial housing estate.



Paws for thought: *Advertiser* columnist Dr Robert Close gives koala-spotting advice to students at Leumeah High School last year. Many playgrounds, reserves and even backyards are now part of koala migration routes.

The *Advertiser* and NPA took then-opposition leader Bob Carr on an inspection of the habitat and he vowed to not only protect it but turn its leafy surrounds into a Dharawal National Park.

Prompted by this, premier John Fahey — lobbied also by Liz Kernohan, the MP for Camden — announced that the Wedderburn land had been resumed and would be declared a reserve.

After more than six years of protests and pickets and the longest-running green ban in Australian history, the battle had finally been won.

Mr Carr broke his promise to create a Dharawal National Park but the site was protected from any housing threats.

From that core habitat at Wedderburn, the koala population then exploded across the city of Campbelltown.

By the early 2000s the animals were being found in suburban streets, backyards and school playgrounds.

Dr Close's studies also collected more data and now entire koala family trees and feeding patterns have been documented.

And our koalas, moving through wildlife corridors, have been found as far away as Douglas Park and Wilton in the south, Holsworthy in the north and Menai and Heathcote in the east.

Dr Close is even trying to confirm a koala sighting west of the busy freeway in the Australian Botanic Garden at Mount Annan.

And, in a wonderfully ironic twist, that controversial sealed road built by developers in 1991 is now the main entrance way to Dharawal National Park — announced by Premier Barry O'Farrell in March.



Two decades ago: A protest at Wedderburn in 1991-92. This spot, at the end of Victoria Road, is now the main entrance to Dharawal National Park.

Isolation ends in cruel irony

By Robert Close

MAC KOALA

IN NOVEMBER, 2009, I was invited by Ray Andrews to inspect his property at Canyonleigh where a healthy colony of koalas had developed in roughly the same time-frame as Campbelltown's population.

Canyonleigh is in the Southern Highlands about 15 kilometres west of Moss Vale and Ray showed me two koalas during a quick drive around his property. However, he usually sees more than that on the same day and often they are mothers and cubs.

In March this year, a sick koala was brought in from Canyonleigh to the Wildlife Health and Conservation Centre at Cobbitty suffering from chlamydia, a dreadful disease that afflicts koalas across the country.

Then Ray Williams contacted us to report that many of the koalas on his property had "wet bottoms" and he hadn't seen a cub for several months. The wet bottom is caused by incont-

ence, a continual leakage of urine from the bladder which is infected by the chlamydial bacteria which also infects the reproductive organs causing infertility.

So it appears koalas have a significant problem in the Southern Highlands. The rapid rate at which the koalas on Ray's property appear to have been affected may mean the Canyonleigh animals are particularly susceptible.

Studies of other koala populations show the proportion of affected animals varies significantly. This suggests the less affected populations have developed a degree of resistance. However, we have never seen koalas in Campbelltown with the clinical signs of chlamydia so it's unlikely they will have any degree of resistance. Tristan Lee's DNA studies have shown that Campbelltown's

koalas have been isolated in the past from the Southern Highlands animals but there is now a point of contact around the Appin-Bulli Road. So contact of the Campbelltown animals with chlamydia is inevitable but may take some time because the first koalas to storm the barricades will be young males. Unless they have acquired the bacterium from their mothers they are unlikely to carry it because they would not yet have mated with females, the usual mode of transmission.

On the other hand, Campbelltown's koalas need contact with other populations to restore the genetic variation that they have lost during their period of isolation. It is a cruel paradox that the genetic cure brings with it disease and suffering.

Report koala sightings on the UWS pager, 9962 9996.

Just leave them alone

By Robert Close

MAC KOALA

ON Wednesday there were two untagged koalas on the bushland edge of Airds, an old male in Woolwash Road, and a younger animal about 750 metres south in Dalkeith Place.

Their arrival was apparently due to fires near the Georges River. I checked both koalas and decided to leave them where they were.

Next morning at 7am I received a report that a small koala had been in a tree in the car park between the Airds pub and shopping centre since midnight.

If it was the Dalkeith koala it must have moved 1.2 kilometres through Airds in just a few hours.

Alternatively it was a third koala that had moved 150m from Smiths Creek, or 500m from the Georges River.

On assessing the situation I decided to leave the koala where it was.

Catching a koala can be stressful and they sometimes jump during capture attempts.

A fall on to the bitumen car park could have been serious.

Moreover, placing it in unfamiliar surroundings following capture may have been detrimental.

The caller, however, feared that students arriving for school would torment the koala.

Unfortunately, he was correct.

The koala climbed down to a point where it was visible and some students, oblivious to the potential penalties and to the enormity of their actions, threw stones at it.

The police were called and also the new mayor, Sue Dobson, two council officers and the local press.

I joined the throng and found the koala had climbed high in the tree and out of range.

My advice was the same as before, however, in the afternoon a new group of students arrived and the RSPCA and the fire brigade were called.

I returned to find a cherry picker ready to go and a crowd of spectators waiting.

We soon had the koala captured, weighed, measured and released by the Georges River.

So an apparently successful outcome was achieved.

However, some weeks we receive 10 or more koala sightings and we cannot call the cherry picker, RSPCA, council, police and WIRES every time to save a koala from attack.

We have to live with the koalas and, as a community, respond to people who abuse them. The koalas are part of Campbelltown and can survive remarkably well in suburbia when left alone.

Report koala sightings on the UWS pager, 9962 9996.

This is a win for Campbelltown's koala colonies

SUNDAY'S announcement of a Dharawal National Park was also a major win for Campbelltown's koala population which uses O'Hare's Creek gorge in the park as a shelter from bushfires.

University of Western Sydney koala expert Robert Close said the announcement gave local koala colonies a much greater chance of long-term survival.

"I think this will allow our koalas to survive here, probably forever," said the *Advertiser* columnist.

Dr Close said he first noticed the importance of the gorge when he found one of the radio-collared male koalas sheltering in the caves there on a very hot day.

"I believe the gorge is the place where koalas will survive bushfires — and by surviving bushfires, there's always going to be recovery. The cliffs, the gorges and the caves give the koalas a place to hide and the actual way the gorge burns is very spasmodic, so you get little fingers of flames."

Triumphal shouts raised as one voice

THE creation of Dharawal National Park has been met with a mix of cheers and sighs of relief.

Sharyn Cullis, of the Georges River Environmental Alliance, said the national park gave Campbelltown residents the opportunity to celebrate a regional image centred on nature and beauty.

"It's an amazing outcome," Ms Cullis said. "Dharawal was virtually an invisible and unknown landscape, with rich coking coal underneath already granted by lease to BHP.

"Honestly, who would dare to think it had any future?"

"It was set to become the shattered and desiccated collateral damage of a mining project."

National Parks Association NSW chief executive Kevin Evans said Dharawal's creeks and upland swamps were important for the protection of the Georges River's headwaters and the biodiversity of southern Sydney.

"This dedication will ensure this beautiful area will be given the strongest possible protection, a goal NPA's Macarthur branch has campaigned to achieve for over three decades," he said.

Campbelltown's Labor mayor, Anoulack Chanthivong, applauded Mr O'Farrell for protecting such a special place for locals.

"This is a great thing and I think it will be well received by the people of Campbelltown," Cr Chanthivong told the *Advertiser*.

"This is not about Labor or Liberal — it's about Campbelltown."

Pat Durman, of the NPA Macarthur branch, said for her the announcement had to be seen to be believed.

"It's absolutely marvellous — it really is the end of a very long fight," she said.

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Dharawal field officer Andrew Lawless has cared for the park since about 1995 and was over the moon.

"After 25 years in my time with the service it's great to be involved in the gazettal of a national park that I came into 15 years ago and I had to go around and survey and drive every fire trail because not a lot of people knew what we had," he said.

Ranger Anita Zubovic was also very excited by the news. "This used to be the quietest park in the state and now it's becoming the most exciting," she said.

Dharawal park dawns

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

While he admitted BHP Billiton was "a bit resistant" to start with, Mr O'Farrell said there had been no deal made with the mining giant to avoid paying compensation.

Plans for the park will soon be put on public display and will include picnic facilities, a new lookout with access for the disabled and walking tracks.

The gazettal on Monday coincided with the one-year anniversary of the O'Farrell government's election in 2011.

Mr O'Farrell said he believed the 6500-hectare national park and its great swimming holes would soon become a tourist attraction.

Wollondilly MP Jai Rowell thanked the local groups and individuals who had not given up hope on a Dharawal National Park over the decades.

"Our community have been wanting this for such a long time," he said.

But Labor environment spokesman Luke Foley raised concerns on Sunday that BHP Billiton would continue to mine on the boundary of the national park which he claimed could affect the park's water reserves and the headwaters of the Georges River.

Mr O'Farrell said the Environmental Protection Authority would issue fines for any activity that affected the park's water.



Big day: Barry O'Farrell and Environment Minister Robyn Parker with (at rear, from left) Camden MP Chris Patterson, Wollondilly MP Jai Rowell, Campbelltown MP Bryan Doyle and Heathcote MP Lee Evans.

Picture: John Veage

Ms Parker said the exploration licences for the land which is on the fringes of the national park had already been approved by the former Labor government.

NEXT WEEK A PICTORIAL OVERVIEW OF OUR NEW NATIONAL PARK

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Welcome indeed: The new sign at the entrance to the national park, off Victoria Road, Wedderburn.

Special community day to embrace the park

Environment Minister Robyn Parker stressed on Sunday the new Dharawal National Park belonged to everyone, saying there would be a community day on Saturday, May 5, to learn what residents wanted from their new attraction. It belongs to all of us and it should be shared, she said.

■ To involve locals in the process, the *Advertiser* and the National Parks Association are organising tours for residents of the new national park.

MORE INFORMATION NEXT WEEK

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DHARAWAL DAM

The long fight by Macarthur branch of the National Parks Association — in partnership with the Advertiser — to create a local national park has been won, thanks to Premier Barry O'Farrell. **Alexandra Pleffer** reports.

Macarthur Advertiser
4th April 2012

This is a win for Campbelltown's koala colonies

SUNDAY'S announcement of a Dharawal National Park was also a major win for Campbelltown's koala population which uses O'Hare's Creek gorge in the park as a shelter from bushfires.

University of Western Sydney koala expert Robert Close said the announcement gave local koala colonies a much greater chance of long-term survival.

"I think this will allow our koalas to survive here, probably forever," said the Advertiser columnist.

Dr Close said he first noticed the importance of the gorge when he found one of the radio-collared male koalas sheltering in the caves there on a very hot day. "I believe the gorge is the place where koalas will survive bushfires — and by surviving bushfires, there's always going to be recovery. The cliffs, the gorges and the caves give the koalas a place to hide and the actual way the gorge burns is very spasmodic, so you get little fingers of flames."



Protected at last: Some of the NPA campaigners (from left) Malcolm Nearn, Don Johnson, Carole Nearn, Rob Michie, Tom Morand, Robert Close, Pat Durman, Graeme Wiffen, Beth Michie, Barry Durman, Julie Sheppard, Tim Carroll, Brian Holmes and Ann Young — celebrate on the O'Hare's Creek lookout, set to become a disability access point in the new park.

Pictures: Jeff McGill

"There will be no mining under the Dharawal National Park, through the national park, or in the national park."

Premier Barry O'Farrell

"When I first got a chance to do a little bit of walking in this area, it was clear to me why Dharawal National Park should be established," Mr O'Farrell said there had been



me why Dharawal National Park should be established," Mr O'Farrell said there had been

no compensation paid to mining companies. He said the government had waited for one last mining lease on the site to lapse earlier this month before moving ahead with the creation of the park.

"The excuse given by Bob Carr for 18 years was that it couldn't be done because of mining interests," Mr O'Farrell said.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE



Top: Wollondilly state MP Jai Rowell takes in the sweeping views with Environment Minister Robyn Parker.

Above: NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service ranger Anita Zubovic stands proudly at one of the new signs.

THE government's plans for the park will soon be placed on public exhibition and will include:

- A new lookout over O'Hare's Creek with disabled access;
- Improved walking access to swimming holes and waterfalls;
- Picnic facilities;
- A loop walk at Darkes Forest to Maddens Falls.

Future's bright for koalas

Can our koalas help our local tourism chances?
Megan Gorrey reports.

MANY observers have been quick to write premature obituaries for Australia's koala population.

But University of Western Sydney koala expert Robert Close says predictions that Australia's koala population may die out in the next 100 years are wildly exaggerated.

Dr Close has even suggested that the thriving koala population on Campbelltown's doorstep could become a boon for the city's tourism prospects.

He said present threats to koalas — such as loss of habitat, dog attacks, vehicle collisions and diseases such as retrovirus, chlamydia and Myrtle Rust — were real, but that Campbelltown's koala population was healthy and expanding.

"I think you can never say there won't be a huge disease that won't go through and wipe them all out," Dr Close said. "But we've found they're remarkably resilient little animals. The Campbelltown koalas are living long, happy lives even though they're on the edge of the city.

"We've only had two which have died of less than old age and of those, one had leukaemia and one died in the fork of a tree and we never found out what the cause was. They're also dispers-



They're here: Robert Close, tracking koalas with one of his regular spotters, Lynn Bowden, believes Campbelltown's koala population could one day be a drawcard for tourists if they make regular appearances. **Picture:** Simon Bennett

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ing long distances which indicates they can operate in very low densities — it means they can find each other even when numbers are low."

To become a tourist attraction, koalas would need to be seen on a regular and reliable basis, which Dr Close said was possible

in areas such as the Peter Meadows Creek fire trail, along Smiths Creek and between Cooks Reserve and James Ruse Park.

Dr Close said the local koala population numbered about 300-800, which is an average of one koala for each 15 hectares.

"We would consider our Campbelltown population to be very low density," he said.

"I've been to places in Victoria where you do a 360-degree turn

and you see two or three koalas."

If Campbelltown's koalas were to become a drawcard for tourists, their environment would need to be protected, Dr Close said. "We can't expect to have good numbers if we continue to clear bushland," he said. "I think we'll find they'll soldier on. If I was going to bet they'll be around in 100 years, I'd bet on it."

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Landmark clearing penalty

By Alexandra Pfeffer

A PROPERTY developer has been fined \$127,500 for clearing a potential koala habitat and part of a wildlife corridor near Appin.

Kyluk plead guilty in the Land and Environment Court to clearing more than 12 hectares of endangered bushland on its Gilead property to make room for cattle grazing.

Last week, Justice Pain — who included the company's lack of remorse in his decision — ordered the Liverpool Council to pay Campbelltown Council \$127,500 and do restoration works for the next 20 years to help the bush regenerate.

The Office of Environment and Heritage said this was one of the largest penalties handed down for clearing land in NSW and the bushland would take more than 20 years to recover. "This is the largest area of illegally



What was left: A 2009 photo of the controversial land-clearing.

cleared endangered bushland we've come across in many years," acting chief executive Sally Barnes stated.

University of Western Sydney koala expert Robert Close said the thousands of trees cleared were part of a wildlife corridor linking the Georges River and the Nepean catchment.

"It's great for people to see the legislation does have teeth and I think future landholders will be careful," Dr Close said.

"The koalas might not try to

cross that area between catchments if there's too big a gap without trees because with trees it means they've got food and protection."

Mayor Anoulack Chanthivong said the money would be used in the Noorumba Reserve Restoration Project.

"I'm glad the court has validated our investigation — the council will not tolerate those who deliberately destroy sensitive environment in our area," he said.

"We take this very seriously because Campbelltown is known for its pristine and very sensitive environmental areas."

Kyluk owner Steve Cenatiempo was the leader of the community campaign against Appin's Leafs Gully power station.

Mr Cenatiempo did not return the Advertiser's calls this week but in 2009 he said he didn't think he had done anything wrong.

Developer refutes impact on koalas

By Alexandra Pfeffer

A KOALA that stopped by St Helens Park last week has renewed residents' concerns about plans to develop nearby bushland.

Koala expert Robert Close said he hadn't been able to identify the furry visitor to Alyan Place but wasn't surprised to find it there.

"I don't think it was ear-tagged but it was following the path that a number of our ear-tagged animals have done, coming out of the bush there," he said. "We've got a radio-collared animal that's actually on the site at the moment."

Dr Close said the 30-hectare site on Kellerman Drive set aside by the Mir Group for 300 houses was important for the local koala community.

"From what we know the gap between the Georges River and the suburbs is a very important area. It's an important place not just for breeding but for when the young animals are kicked out of home because the route that many of them have been travelling has been along that gap, of which the development is part. So if that gets built up, it's going to restrict the free passage of animals along that river and also it's going to restrict the potential breeding area."

Mir Group spokesman Sam Mir was not surprised by the koala sighting but said the proposed development would not have an impact on the area's koalas.

"We're talking tens of acres that has been zoned residential for 40 years and it's not like it's started any development — this is just the last bit of the puzzle, the last bit of residential zoned land in the area," he said. "If you take tens of acres out of hundreds of thousands of acres of untouched natural bushland that adjoin it, it just will not have an impact."

Mr Mir said the homes were needed to provide affordable houses for local first-home buyers.

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Rail threat to koalas

By Megan Gorrey

A HIGH speed train travelling between Sydney and Melbourne would slice through the pristine bushland gorges east of Campbelltown.

The proposed rail link could carry 84 million passengers between capital cities on the east coast every year at an estimated cost of \$114 billion, a detailed report released by the federal government concluded last week.

But Campbelltown's civic leaders are concerned the project would damage the region's natural environment and threaten the local koala population.

The report showed trains travelling at speeds of up to 350km/h would leave from Central Station and emerge from an underground tunnel at Holsworthy.

A station would be located at the northern end of the Defence Department land, just south of Cambridge Avenue.

The preferred route would then continue alongside the Georges River to the east of Glenfield, Macquarie Fields, Minto and Campbelltown, through Wedderburn to Douglas Park.

From there the rail link would



follow the Hume Highway towards the Southern Highlands.

The report stated the route would have minimal impact on local communities but would impact local vegetation.

It also acknowledged that crossing the Georges River would be costly.

Campbelltown mayor Sue Dobson said the proposal showed the federal government did not understand the local environment.

"We need to protect the environmentally sensitive Georges River, the natural bushland, the koala colony, Aboriginal sites and native flora and fauna."

Local koala expert Robert Close said the rail line could be "a major blow" to the region's koala population if it went ahead.

"Major blow": The proposed route for a high speed rail link running between Sydney and Melbourne would skirt alongside Campbelltown's suburbs but divide the local koala population.

"It could be very serious. It's dividing the animals in Holsworthy with the animals in Ruse and Kentlyn, because there would probably be a fence alongside the train that would create a barricade," Dr Close said.

"There would be a loss of genetic variation and the building works would be disruptive."

Macarthur MP Russell Matheson said the Coalition was in favour of modern infrastructure but would like to see more information.

"The devil's in the detail and we've really got to see that cost-benefit analysis," he said. "Twenty years ago Campbelltown was proposed for fast rail and there was going to be a stop there."

"It's been talked about for a long time but you've got to look at whether it's viable."

Details: The full report and feedback forms are at infrastructure.gov.au/hsr.

Advertiser

MAC CHAT

5/9/12



Survival of fittest

CRAMER the koala (pictured) has long ruled the treetops of Spring Creek, but his recent adventures further afield in the streets of St Helens Park has us wondering if he's been pushed out of his patch by a younger, fitter male. "Hopefully, he is just patrolling his home range," said our local koala expert Rob Close. Catch up with all the latest marsupial meanderings in our popular weekly Mac Koala column on page 28.

Platypus sealed in a deadly embrace

By Robert Close

30/11/11

ANOTHER dead platypus has turned up in a Sydney basin creek, this time with a rubber seal firmly wedged around its neck.

It is now undergoing a post-mortem examination to verify that the seal caused the death, but the circumstantial evidence against the seal — and whoever discarded it — is persuasive.

This platypus was found in Little Wheeny Creek at Kurrajong, a tributary of the Nepean River, and shows that even simple rubbish items can be fatal for platypuses.

The creek is small and isolated with, one would think, very little rubbish. There was enough, however, to cause the death of the platypus.

By contrast, the Georges River suffers from a huge influx of rubbish. Almost all the stormwater flowing along gutters east of the F5 freeway in Campbelltown drains into creeks that eventually run into the Georges River.

Consequently, any rubbish dropped in the streets will make

its way into these creeks.

Although gross pollutant traps built at the bushland/suburban interface capture much of the garbage, searches downstream of these traps demonstrate that a lot of rubbish is not collected.

Small items such as the ring that killed the platypus are particularly difficult to capture.

To protect our platypuses, we need to stop all rubbish from entering our gutters in the first place.

This requires a dedicated and aware community.

In my street, cockatoos and crows pull rubbish out of wheely bins so over-filled that the lids don't close.

This problem, of course, is easily rectified, but may require cleaning up a neighbour's mess and then telling the neighbour of the problem.

■ On the koala scene, we've seen the first drop this year in koala sightings that indicates that the

MAC KOALA



mating season is declining.

Only four sightings were recorded this week — two in Darling Avenue, Ruse, and one each in Wedderburn and Minto Heights.

The former two areas have been popular with koalas for many years and those in Wedderburn and Minto Heights have this year reported more sightings than usual.

We recently attached a radio collar to a young female koala that

was in danger from dogs near the junction of Peter Meadows and Georges River roads. The female, named Heather by her spotters, has a peanut-sized joey in the pouch. She has clearly not yet established her own home-range because she has travelled a considerable distance from where she was captured.

Please report koala sightings on UWS pager 9962 9996.

Fresh hope for platypus

By Megan Gorrey and Alexandra Pfeffer

THERE has been another reported sighting of a platypus in the Georges River near Campbelltown — and this one was seen alive.

Eagle Vale resident Daniel Draper told the *Advertiser* he saw the elusive creature when he went on a bushwalk to look for koalas with his son Blake in March.

"We walked down near the Woolwash area and at first I just thought it was a duck," Mr Draper said. "It was going up close to the water and then going back down again — it looked like it was swimming on the top of the water and getting insects."

"We sat on a cliff edge above it and watched it for about five minutes. It was in the deepest part of the Woolwash."

Mr Draper said he didn't think the sighting was out of the ordinary until he saw our recent articles about the two dead platypuses which have been found in the Georges River near Campbelltown in the past month.

Leading Australian platypus expert Tom Grant, from the University of NSW, visited the Woolwash with the *Advertiser* on Monday and said the area provided a fairly good habitat for the creatures.

"They tend to breed in earth banks, so even though there is a lot of sandstone in this area the habitat's there for them, although probably not as much as some of the other rivers they've been spotted in."



Exciting sighting: University of NSW platypus expert Tom Grant and University of Western Sydney koala expert Robert Close with Eagle Vale resident Blake Draper at the Woolwash, on the Georges River near Airds, where Blake and his father Daniel spotted a platypus swimming earlier this year.

Picture: Luke Fuda

Dr Grant worked with members of the Macarthur branch of the National Parks Association to carry out a survey in the upper Georges River in 2002 and another in the Dharawal State Conservation Area in 2008, but did not find one platypus.

"The fact we've done these surveys and we've been unable to locate any, even though reputable people have seen them, indicates

they're out there but in small numbers. If they're getting killed in traps and by careless fishermen it's a worry: it means they might not be here at all in the next 10 years."

Dr Grant, together with University of Western Sydney koala expert Robert Close, urged Macarthur residents to avoid using yabby traps in the river, and to pick up rubbish and fishing materials that could be

drowning hazards for the animals. Dr Close also encouraged bushwalkers to be on the lookout for platypuses in local waterways and to report any sightings.

If you spot a platypus contact Dr Close via koala pager 9962 9996 or the Advertiser via 4640 5151 or macarthuradvertiser.com.au

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Second platypus found

Local environmentalists and scientists are hoping the next platypus seen in the Georges River will actually be alive. **Megan Gorrey** reports.

FOR the second time in two weeks, a platypus has been found dead in the Georges River — and locals aren't yet sure whether the discovery is bad luck or a good sign for Campbelltown's elusive platypus population.

A local wildlife spotter found the drowned animal caught inside a yabby trap about 50 metres downstream from The Basin at Kentlyn on Monday.

Local koala expert, environmentalist and *Advertiser* columnist Robert Close was upset the animal was dead, but said the discovery of the fully grown, 48cm-long male platypus was still more proof of their presence in the river.

"It's quite amazing we should have two sightings in two weeks when I've been looking for 20 years," Dr Close said.

"The chance of having two incidents within two weeks is very slim."

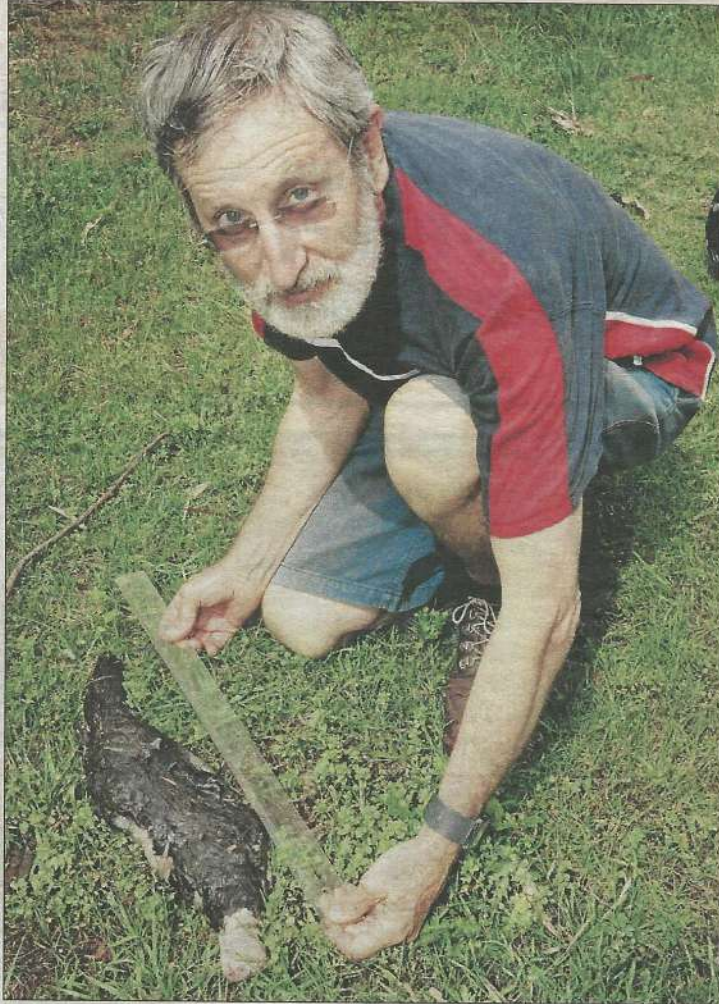
A dead platypus discovered in the Georges River near Old Kent Road at Kentlyn a fortnight ago was the first confirmed sighting in the area in years.

At the time, Dr Close said the unusual creatures were rarely found in the area and several past sightings were unconfirmed.

Dr Close said the fact both platypuses were found within 3.5 kilometres of each other, close to the junction of the Georges River and Punchbowl Creek, could be significant.

"My thought now is that they're coming out of Punchbowl Creek, which comes out of army land, so it is quite protected and runs right into The Basin."

"I think it will certainly be



Grim discovery: This dead platypus found in the Georges River is the second confirmed sighting of one of the creatures in as many weeks. Dr Robert Close will send the platypus's skull to the Australian Museum in Sydney for its records.

Picture: Jeff de Pasquale

■ **IF you spot a platypus in our river system, please contact Dr Close and the *Advertiser* via 4640 5151 or macarthuradvertiser.com.au**

worthwhile to investigate that creek. We've never looked at it before.

"In just two weeks to have two animals killed because of the acts of thoughtless fishermen is devastating, but it does give us the impetus to keep looking."

National Parks Association Macarthur branch member Julie Sheppard said the discovery of another dead platypus in the river was extremely disappointing.

"But again it shows they're there, they are in the Georges River."

Ms Sheppard said the discovery reinforced the dangers traps posed for native wildlife.

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PLATYPUS PROOF

Campbelltown is famous for its koalas — but could proof of an elusive platypus presence in the Georges River add to our natural heritage focus? **Megan Gorrey** reports.

THE good news is a platypus discovered in the Georges River at Kentlyn last week is the first confirmed sighting in the area in years. The bad news is that the platypus was found dead.

It had swallowed a fishing hook and thick fishing line had wrapped around its throat.

Local koala expert and *Advertiser* columnist Robert Close said a bush-walker found the large male floating in the river last Monday.

Dr Close said the iconic creatures were rarely found in the area and several past sightings were unconfirmed.

"This one is a verified report. To have an actual body is confirmation of the sighting."

National Parks Association Macarthur branch member Julie Sheppard said the fact the animal was dead was "tragic" but it left hope there would be more live sightings down the track. She said branch members,



together with leading platypus biologist Dr Tom Grant, organised a community watch over two weekends in 2009 but did not find any concrete evidence of the creatures.

"We've always thought they were there — we've had anecdotal reports of platypuses in the Georges River for 30 years, but have never actually been able to confirm they were there.

Unhappy ending: The body of this male platypus — a rarity near Campbelltown — will be sent to the Australian Museum in Sydney for its records.

"This confirms it so in that way it's fantastic, but they must be in very low numbers given there have been so few sightings; so to lose one in this way is just tragic.

"Knowing there are species like that near Campbelltown — it's more reason to look after the Georges River. We've got these koalas and platypuses on our doorstep."

Ms Sheppard said the animal's death was an important reminder for people to take rubbish and fish-

ing waste away with them when they visited the river.
Campbelltown councillor Julie Bourke raised the matter at last week's council meeting and called on the council to re-examine signs along the river.

"As a matter of course if people are there with their fishing gear, especially lines and hooks, they should take them away with them," Cr Bourke said. "It's about being aware — I'm sure people would be horrified to hear their leftover lines had caused the death of a platypus."

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Mc Ad 26/10/2011

Eager marsupials at large

Campbelltown's koalas continue to pop up in local backyards and streets. Megan Gorrey reports.

THE likelihood of gazing up into a tree in your backyard and spotting a koala continues to increase, as Campbelltown's expanding koala colony invades local suburbs.

Koala expert and *Advertiser* columnist Robert Close said the high number of sightings he had recorded in the past few weeks were because of the fact it's koala breeding season.

He said the marsupials continued to make their way into backyards at Wedderburn, Kentlyn, Ruse, St Helens Park, Airds and Bradbury.

Regular koala spotter Lou Melham bought his leafy Wedderburn property about 22 years ago and said he had seen about 50 koalas there in that time.

Mr Melham ushered a koala off Wedderburn Gorge Road a couple of weeks ago and nine-year-old son recently spotted one in a nearby tree.

"When I first came out here they said there were koalas, but I think over the years I'm seeing more," he said.

Mr Melham said he and his family enjoyed looking out for koalas in their backyard. "It feels good to spot something in its natural state and I know it's for the cause of pre-



McAd 2/11/11



In the neighbourhood: Female Vicki – who was known to frequent Kentlyn Public School – was another one of Robert Close's suburban koala finds.

serving these areas from mining or whatever it might be." Dr Close said it was still unclear whether the creatures being spotted in suburban Campbelltown were part of the original threatened Wedderburn koala colony. "If you go back to 1980 when they were all found it was at O'Hare's Creek and a couple at Wedderburn Gorge," he said.

"We don't know if this is the original population or whether they were just at Kentlyn and Ruse in such small numbers we didn't

notice them."

Dr Close said he had recorded about 3000 koala sightings in the area in the past 20 years.

"Those reports have allowed us to track the koalas," he said.

"We're dependent so much on people like Lou reporting koala sightings to us."

As well as koalas in the treetops, have you seen a platypus in our river? Let us know at macarthuradvertiser.com.au.

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Urban invasion: Regular koala spotter Lou Melham looks for signs of the furry creatures at his Wedderburn property with local expert Robert Close. Picture: Luke Fuda

Sanctuary in park

Koalas will be one of the stars of a Dharawal National Park if local MP Jai Rowell has anything to do with it.

With mining lease negotiations dealt with and Campbelltown about to get its own patch of green on the map, Mr Rowell said he wanted the planned Dharawal National Park to become a tourism draw card.

"I also have a vision of having a koala interpretive centre and somewhere to park your cars and go have a walk," Cr Rowell said. "That may not happen next week – but I still have a vision of developing that national park into more tourist opportunities and the koala centre would be good for that."

Grassroots push pays off

26/10/11 mehd

Local campaigners have won about 99 per cent of what they wanted — and they're delighted. **Megan Gorrey** reports.

ENVIRONMENTALISTS who have fought long and hard are elated at news Campbelltown could have its own Dharawal National Park by Christmas.

Premier Barry O'Farrell announced last week that a national park would comprise 98.7 per cent of the state conservation area following a compromise over mining leases.

Georges River Environmental Alliance member Sharyn Cullis said the announcement was a "stunning result".

"The wonderful thing is that there will be no compensation paid to BHP Billiton," she said. "I imagine the negotiations would have been very tough, and so I'm grateful to BHP for that."

Ms Cullis said the national park would mean the pristine headwaters of the Georges River, including 224 upland swamps, would be protected forever.

"The whole decision sets a bit of a precedent that communities and groups can work really hard together and with their councils and MPs and get good results for the environment," she said.

National Parks Association (NPA) Macarthur branch member Pat Durman said the battle to

THE CAMPAIGN FOR CAMPBELLTOWN'S OWN NATIONAL PARK



Green warriors: Barry Durman, Sharyn Cullis and Pat Durman are among many nature-lovers who have spent years championing the cause. **Picture:** Luke Fuda

save Dharawal had been a long fight: "We're really, really pleased about it and would like to thank the O'Farrell government.

"It's a real win for Campbelltown — we're definitely moving up in the world."

Mrs Durman both said the announcement was the result of a "grassroots push" led by MPs, councils, community groups and the *Advertiser*.

Illawarra Coal's head of external affairs John Brannon said two parcels of land — totalling about 76 hectares — would remain as state conservation areas as they were vital to mining operations.

as well as a small section for future mining which represents 0.18 per cent of the Dharawal National Park and is vital to the continuation of our West Cliff operations and the maintenance of more than 400 jobs."

NPA member Julie Sheppard is concerned about mining in those areas — "but, overall, we're just over the moon about it. You've got a national park that will never be mined or have gas extraction.

"The fact [mining companies] are relinquishing mining leases — I don't know if that's ever happened before."

One of the areas excluded from the Dharawal National Park contains Illawarra Coals current West Cliff pit bottom, which has been in operation for over 30 years, and is the main access point for our employees and exit infrastructure to enter and exit the mine," Mr Brannon said.

"The second area that has been excluded contains already driven roadways that provide access . . .

Changing map: The green shows the core Dharawal National Park site and the red marks the areas to be accessible to coal miners. The yellow marks the four river reserves proposed as a future extension to the national park.



Stage two: Jai Rowell at Wedderburn Gorge, one of four additional Georges River sites to be investigated after the local national park is declared.

Next fight: riverside reserves

BEAUTIFUL riverside reserves The Basin, Freres Crossing, the Woolwash and Wedderburn Gorge will be considered to become part of Campbelltown's Dharawal National Park — but not just yet.

Wollondilly MP Jai Rowell said the main national park site (located south of Wedderburn) was almost ready to be officially declared, whereas the four riverside reserves still needed more investigation.

"I just don't want to see any Dharawal delays — it's been since 1992 already so even the word delay scares me," Mr Rowell said.

"I'm very keen to see them [the four reserves] considered in the future but I want to very much focus on getting Dharawal up and running and delivered this year. Once it's done, then we'll fight the next one."

Mr Rowell's view is supported by the *Advertiser*, the Macarthur branch of the National Parks Association and the Macarthur Bushwalkers, who have sponsored the proposal to include the four Georges River reserves.



Hello, I'm Matari

By Megan Gorrey
Picture: Nathan Ng 5 | 10 | 11

LOOKING a little world-weary as he peers from his sanctuary, Matari the baby koala has already had to prove his strength and resilience in the past few weeks.

WIREs carer Cate Ryan said Matari (Aboriginal for "little man") was discovered in a backyard on Riverview Road, Kentlyn, where he had been attacked by a Maltese terrier last week.

He had bite mark grazes on his chest and head and was taken to the Sydney

University Veterinary Teaching Hospital, Camden, for treatment.

Matari is now under the close watch of Ms Ryan, of St Andrews, who says he weighs 430 grams and is probably about six months old.

"He's here on a rolled-up lambswool with several lined pouches and he has little bits of foliage he grazes on through the day, and he's on formula of course," Ms Ryan said.

"He still calls for his mum occasionally but he loves cuddling and he curls up under my chin and falls asleep."

"He's a happy, carefree, very cute little fellow."

Matari was the third baby koala found in the Sydney basin in the past 30 years and Ms Ryan cared for all three.

She said she did not know how Matari came to be attacked, or what happened to his mother.

In the meantime, she expects to care for him for the next 12 months.

Local koala expert Robert Close said there had been many koala sightings around Campbelltown in recent weeks, following the start of the mating season in September.

"Youngsters from last year get the heaven from Mum and that's why we're seeing all these little ones out and about," he said.

Dr Close said Matari would be a good candidate for a translocation program at Tarlo River National Park in the Southern Highlands.

"He's going to be a tricky one because he won't have been trained by his mum about what to eat, how to cross roads, or what to do if a dog attacks, so it will be a task," Dr Close said.

■ See also Mac Koala, page 23

'Koalas will be fine'

By Megan Gorrey

SYDNEY Water has removed trees from land on the western side of Appin Road in an area known to be a koala crossing — and residents aren't happy about it.

Katrina Hobhouse, who lives on the Mount Gilead property, said about six mature spotted gum trees were removed on Monday to make way for the Glenfield sewage-treatment plant upgrade.

The *Advertiser* took several calls from concerned residents.

"I've known for quite a long time this was going to happen and I asked them to move the work to the eastern side of Appin Road but they wouldn't," Ms Hobhouse said. "They said it was much more expensive and much more risky. The thing that concerns me is any loss of trees on that side of Appin Road — they could have

under-bored those trees." More than 20 trees are expected to be removed.

Sydney Water spokeswoman Emma Whale said the trees were cut down to make way for a transfer main that was part of the new pressure-sewerage system.

She said Sydney Water had



Stumped: Sydney Water has offered to offset the removal of the trees by planting new ones. Angry residents have posted signs along the road to voice their disapproval. **Pictures: Jonathan Ng**

been in talks with residents about the matter. "Before undertaking any work potential impacts on threatened and endangered species were assessed through the Review of Environmental Factors process," Ms Whale said.

She said the project would not have an impact on any koala habitat.



MAC KOALA PAGE 26

Left: Robert Close scans the treetops, a koala route, with Ester Tuilali and other students at Leumeah High School last week.

Picture: Jeff McGill

Leumeah High is on koala watch

WHEN people hear a phrase like "wildlife corridor" they often imagine a thick patch of bush.

But that's not always the case. As Campbelltown's expanding koala colony is proving, wildlife corridors can also be backyards, parks, even schools.

Advertiser columnist and koala expert Robert Close was at Leumeah High School last week, a popular route for marsupial migrants moving from Smiths Creek Reserve to Peter Meadows Creek in Kentlyn. Students and teachers are keen to help and said they are keeping alert for furry visitors.

■ A koala, feared injured by a car near the school last week, was spotted on Monday night again trying to cross Junction Road. "Apparently, cars stopped to let it cross but it turned back and into bushland," Dr Close said.

3/8/11 meA

Koala invasion would be welcome

Have Campbelltown's koalas crossed the freeway to settle in our Botanic Garden? Maybe you can help provide the proof. **Megan Gorrey reports.**

NEXT time you're in the Australian Botanic Garden, Mount Annan, be sure to look up — you just might spy a koala in the branches of a towering eucalyptus tree.

Local koala expert Robert Close, who has long tracked the movements of Campbelltown's koala population, said he had received recent reports of koalas in the gully near the main entrance.

Although he can't confirm the sightings just yet, Dr Close said it was only a matter of time before the region's koalas made their way to the garden.

"We estimate there's a population of about 300 koalas in Campbelltown, which means about 150

females, of which probably two-thirds are producing young," he said. "So you're looking at 100 new cubs each year and all the other sites around Campbelltown are full now."

Koalas from the original core colony at Wedderburn's in the 1980s have since spread throughout Campbelltown and are regularly spotted in leafy streets and suburban backyards. Tagged animals have also been found as far north as Holsworthy, as



Matter of time: Local koala expert and Advertiser columnist Robert Close believes this spot at the southern end of the Australian Botanic Garden, Mount Annan, is the place where koalas would probably first appear. Local koalas are scattering in all directions. The one at the left appeared in Menai, Sutherland Shire. **Main picture: Jonathan Ng**

the Botanic Garden the koalas would need to skirt the edges of Rosemeadow and then navigate a number of potentially dangerous barriers, including the freeway, aqueduct and Menangle Road.

He said there were plenty of gullies and pockets of greenery that would help them on their way. "There is a culvert near the gardens they could use," he said.

Dr Close said the first koalas were

most likely to be seen near a creek at the southern end of the garden, which he said had a mixture of plant species, including eucalypts and casuarina, and a high water table.

Koalas would be a "wonderful asset" to the Botanic Garden. "It would be a terrific tourist attraction and they've got a supply of beautiful eucalypts," he said. "Then the issue would be control, but if numbers got too big we could translocate."

Crossing road can be fatal

KOALAS making their way from the Georges River to the Botanic Garden would first need to cross busy Appin Road, where many animals have been killed.

Dr Robert Close said koalas would need to cross the open Sydney Water channel that runs between Appin Road and the Nepean River.

"The channel would be a significant hazard, but can be avoided if the animal crosses Appin Road by the Copperfield Drive roundabout and thence into Noorumba Reserve," Dr Close said. "The channel then goes into a tunnel under Mount Sugarloaf near Klibride Nursing Home and koalas could cross it there and turn up at the Sugarloaf stables."

From there the next hazards would be Menangle Road and the freeway, but Dr Close said that next to the Botanic Garden was a large culvert that could be accessible for koalas.

Dr Close said that, alternatively, koalas could follow Menangle Creek from Noorumba Reserve to the Nepean River, where they could cross under the freeway bridge then follow the river to the south-west corner of the garden.

Firmly urban koala found dead in tree

MAC 6/4/11

By Megan Gorrey

SHE was one of the furry pioneers of Campbelltown's suburban-dwelling koala population — but Charlotte the koala has been found dead in the fork of a Ruse tree with a joey in her pouch.

Koala expert and *Advertiser* columnist Dr Robert Close made the sad discovery last week during a routine check on the eight-year-old koala,

who was first captured in the area in 2005.

Dr Close said Charlotte was too decomposed when he found her to be able to carry out an autopsy but he would examine her skull and skeleton.

He said Charlotte was a wild animal who was notable in that she chose a life in the suburbs over bushland.

"When we took her back to the bush, which we did about

four times, she avoided it and came back to the suburban areas," Dr Close said.

"She might have been driven out of the bush by resident female koalas but it may have been she just felt more comfortable there.

"It's fascinating that Charlotte was able to live by Georges River Road the way she did."

Dr Close said Charlotte was followed by other koalas who have since decided to call the leafy streets west of Campbelltown home — including Liz, who lived in Darling Avenue, Bernie who can be spotted in Acacia Avenue, and Price who has been spotted near Wests Leagues Club.

MAC KOALA COLUMN PAGE 19

Preferred suburbs: Koala expert Dr Robert Close doesn't yet know the cause of Charlotte's death.



A deer spotted in bushland at Long Point

WE'RE used to koala sightings in Campbelltown but some slightly more unexpected creatures have been found in the area in the past few weeks.

Robert Close said he recently received a call from residents who said they spotted a doe and young deer near bushland at Long Point.

Dr Close said there was a large deer population in

the Royal National Park but was surprised they had been seen that close to Holsworthy.

Earlier this week, a North American corn snake was discovered inside a car near The Crossroads. Local WIRES reptile co-ordinator Matt Calvert said the small, bright orange snake was probably an illegal pet and would have to be destroyed.

Johnny settling into his new home

EARLIER this year the future looked bleak for Johnny, the blind koala found in a bad way in Ruse on Australia Day. However, he has now found a new home at Symbio Wildlife Park in Helensburgh.

When a family discovered Johnny in their yard in Endeavour Street he was severely dehydrated with a heart murmur and congenital cataracts which meant he was effectively blind.

Head nurse at Camden's Avian, Reptile and Exotic Pet Hospital Sharon Andronicos, who cared for Johnny when he was first brought in, said she was very happy Symbio took him in because his only other option was euthanasia.

"I think he's going to be a great zoo animal because he's such a calm little guy," she said.

"He looked for you when he heard you coming into the room and he always seemed quite grateful when you gave him leaves to eat."

Ms Andronicos said she hadn't heard how Johnny was going but assumed "no news is good news".

"I was planning to visit him these school holidays."



Up close and personal: Johnny the blind koala is now an attraction at Symbio Wildlife Park in Helensburgh. **Picture:** Kieren L. Tilly



Surprise visitor: The untagged koala in Menai last Thursday. Dr Close said it could have arrived direct from Campbelltown, or from the expanding numbers in the Holsworthy military reserve.

Campbelltown's furiest commuter

THIS meandering marsupial is a long way from home. But the little traveller — part of our ever-expanding koala colony — delighted Menai residents when it strolled out of the bush and wandered along a street before setting in a tree in Jackson Close.

The tree is in Erin Ash's front yard and she was excited about the little Campbelltown visitor. "I wanted to cut this tree down because branches would always fall on my car — but now I think it will stay for good," she said. Robert Close and his University of Western Sydney students have been studying koalas since 1990, supported by the Advertiser, and have been studying the local animals

as they migrate as far away as Douglas Park to the south, at Sutherland Shire to the east.

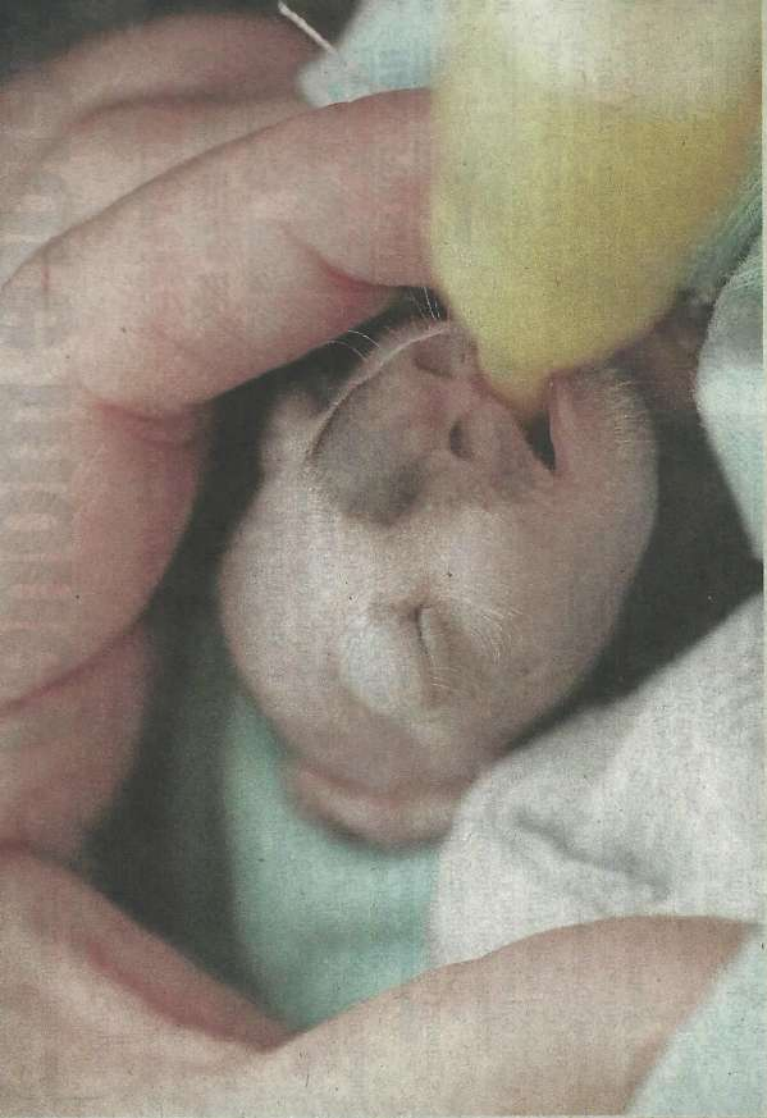
Dr Close said they had found tagged koalas from the Wedderburn colony near Campbelltown at Alford's Point and Heathcote National Park.

"Koalas can disperse 20 kilometres and usually head across Heathcote Road into the suburbs," Dr Close said. "My prediction is that we are going to see more of them pop up along this road and wander around."

Dr Close said this untagged koala could be a sign of an increase of breeding females across the Holsworthy range.

— Sandra Siagi

Macarthur Advertiser 23rd February 2011



Labour of love: Marlee the baby koala has put on some weight and seems to be going well after she was found in her dead mother's pouch at Kentyn. But fingers will have to be crossed as she recovers.

It's touch and go for orphan Marlee

By Megan Gorrey

LITTLE Marlee is going to need more than luck to get through the next few weeks.

A Kentyn family found the tiny joey koala, who does not even have any fur yet, tucked up inside her dead mother's pouch in their yard on the weekend.

Marlee was immediately placed into the care of WIRES volunteer Cate Ryan, of St Andrews.

She said Marlee had made it through the crucial first 48 hours, but was still not out of the woods. "She's very young and extremely borderline viability," Ms Ryan said.

Marlee weighs just 1.03 grams and at about 10 centimetres long she could easily fit in the palm of your hand. But instead Marlee is being kept wrapped up in a humidicrib at a constant temperature of 32 degrees.

"I need to set my alarm clock so she has her feeds seven times a day, and she gets Sorbolene put on her skin to keep it moist," Ms Ryan said.

She said Marlee was very susceptible to disease and illness. "Anything can happen to her at any time so it's a case of wait and see. If she survives she'll still need to be in care for the next 16 months."

The Advertiser will keep readers updated on Marlee's progress in the coming weeks and months.

University of Western Sydney koala expert Dr Robert Close said the cause of Marlee's mother's death was still unclear but he would carry out an autopsy.

CAMPBELLTOWN'S LONG-DISTANCE KOALA PAGE 6

MAC KOALA COLUMN PAGE 26

Macarthur Advertiser 23rd February 2011

Koala on the road to health

MacAd 9/2/11

By Megan Gorrey

CUTE-AS-CAN-BE koala joey Johnny has come a long way since he was nearly run over as he struggled to keep up with his mother on a busy Ruse road.

Johnny, thought to be about 12 months old, has cataracts which have left him virtually blind and unable to cope alone in the wild.

University of Western Sydney koala expert and *Advertiser* columnist Robert Close has long followed Johnny and his mother Liz, who is, often spotted in bushland in Ruse.

Dr Close said Johnny became separated from Liz and approached a family in Endeavour Street on Australia Day.

"Unfortunately, Johnny did not appear to be coping well," he said. "He was listless and just wanted to sprawl about in the shade."

Johnny was treated at Camden's Wildlife Health and Conservation Centre and Avian, Reptile and Exotic Animal Hospital, where staff found he was not only dehydrated but also had congenital cataracts and a heart murmur.

Dr Close said such genetic conditions often appeared in areas where koala populations were more inbred. "Campbelltown has a degree of inbreeding with koalas and so you can expect more problems," he said.

Animal-hospital head nurse Sharon Andronicos said Johnny was in a bad way when she first saw him but was making a remarkable recovery.

"He was a very sick koala when he first came in," she said.

"He could barely lift his head. He



Happy ending: With the help of intensive care and plenty of leaves, Johnny has been nursed back to health.

Picture: Kieren L. Tilly

was really dehydrated and hadn't eaten for a while."

Staff gave Johnny fluid injections and fed him a milk-based diet to get him back on track.

"Now he's so active and healthy," Ms Andronicos said. "He knows

where all the parts of the gum trees

are and I'm constantly collecting new leaves for him."

Dr Close said Johnny's genetic abnormalities meant he couldn't be released back into the wild or be used for breeding.

"He will go to Symbio Wildlife Park at Waterfall where he will join a group of nine other koalas and can expect to live another carefree 14 years," he said.

Report koala sightings to the UWS koala pager, 9962 9996.

MAC KOALA COLUMN PAGE 28

Science's daring pioneers gather

Advertiser columnist Dr Robert Close celebrated 15 years of our popular *Mac Koala* column at the Macarthur Heritage Lecture last Wednesday night, at Campbelltown Arts Centre. **Jeff McGill** reports.

TWO decades ago Campbelltown knew very little about the koala colony it was fighting to save.

Today, that's very different, thanks to the work of Dr Robert Close of the University of Western Sydney.

He and his dedicated team of volunteers have spent years keeping detailed notes, sifting through poo, studying the landscape and climbing trees to check koalas for disease and fit radio transmitters.

Their legacy is a much better knowledge of our ever-expanding colony of Campbelltown koalas.

From that small core habitat at Wedderburn in 1986, the animals have now moved deep into our suburban streets and travelled as far as Wollondilly and Sutherland.

Week by week local readers have been able to keep track of the volunteers' work, thanks to about 750 *Mac Koala* columns. The *Advertiser* has also helped fund the studies.

Dr Close entered

Familiar faces:

Koalas are now found deep in suburban streets, particularly in Ruse, Kentlyn, Bradbury and St Helens Park.



On the hunt: Dr Robert Close radio-tracking our local marsupials. **Picture:** Luke Fuda

wrote the first several years of the *Mac Koala* column. Tristan Lee has taken over from Steven in the past few years and is due to submit his own PhD in next few months."

He also praised the volunteers, particularly Lynn Bowden, who has been a mainstay of the project for 14 years and was recently awarded the Campbelltown Council 2010 Heritage Medal.

He also mentioned Wendy and Mick Fairs who did several years of radio-tracking and capture.

Dr Close recalled the day when radio-tracked Courtney from Spring Creek, St Helens Park, was making one of her occasional forays into Bradbury and was on a branch.

"I elected to climb the tree and block access to the main trunk then catch her as she went past," he said. "However, I expected her to climb

along the top of the branch. Instead, she came along underneath!

"She found my legs and at one stage was suspended solely from her claws gripping in to my calves."

Dr Close no longer climbs trees himself. He said that role is done by Kieran Griffin, who runs a scaffolding business and with his partner Mariette Ennik was so concerned about "our primitive climbing methods" they bought two superb sets of climbing gear and expert advice.

Dr Close said Acacia Avenue in Ruse was one of the main hot-spots for sightings — not only for koalas but everything from wombats to pygmy possums.

He showed maps of koala territory and even a family tree of one of the

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

GETTING THERE

1986: The original colony of koalas is discovered at Wedderburn.

1988: Developer Yap Yan Pin moves in to create a residential estate on the site. The Liberal state government rejects Campbelltown Council pleas to stop the housing.

1988-1991: Major community protests and a campaign by environmentalists, schools, community groups, unions and the *Advertiser*.

1990: After reading our reports on the lack of in-

depth knowledge on the koala colony, Dr Robert

Close, of UWS, begins his

exhaustive research program.

1991: The long

battle to save the core colony is finally won when the Australian Tax

Office forces Yap Yan Pin into receivership for unpaid taxes.

1992-93: Dr Close has by now fitted koalas with radio transmitters

to accurately track eating patterns and corridors of travel. Colony

expands to Kentlyn and beyond.

1994: Pressured by Labor promises to save the colony the Liberal state government resumes the original Wedderburn habitat and makes it a reserve.

1995: Dr Close starts a weekly *Mac Koala* column to inform residents. The *Advertiser* donates \$20,000 to local research.



Koalas living in our street? Surely you can't be Sirius!

MAC CHRONICLE 25/1/2011

LISA COSGROVE

RUSE confirmed its reputation as Campbelltown's koala capital when more of the cuddly marsupials were seen in the suburb last week.

Residents in Sirius St, were delighted when they spotted a mother koala and her joey in a gum tree.

The sighting follows four reports of koalas in Airds, Long Point and Ruse since July 2010.

Christine Myers and her husband Shane were surprised when they first saw the pair at 6.45am on Thursday, crossing the road and climbing up a tree on the nature strip.

"We've lived in Ruse for nine years and we've never seen them down this far," Mrs Myers said.

While it was a thrill for those who gathered, there were also a few tense moments as the joey climbed high up in the tree on Thursday afternoon, clinging to flimsy-looking branches. Mr Myers also rescued the joey from the road early on Friday morning.

University of Western Sydney koala expert Robert Close visited the koalas on Thursday and Friday and decided it was better to leave them rather than relocate them. "The mother is Liz, who was found at the back of Ruse in December 2005," Mr Close said.

"She's been spending a lot of time in the suburb, perhaps because of the greater range of eucalypts in the gardens, so she knows her way around." The joey is believed to be about 11 months.



A mother koala and her joey where spotted in a Ruse gum tree much to the delight of residents who gathered to take photos of the cuddly marsupials. Pictures: ROBERT POZO



FLUFFY FRIENDS: See more pictures of the koalas and watch video footage at macarthurchronicle.com.au

knowledge of koalas

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

koalas, Shirley [which we will look at in a future issue].

Dr Close noted: "Shirley had a great influence on the local koala population — and on changing our original thinking."

He said, based on broader koala research, they originally expected that: females would die before eight years, there would only be about three cubs per female, survivorship of weanlings would be low, most animals living near a road would die on it, and koalas regularly visiting suburbs would be killed by cars or dogs.

"Shirley's family tree suggests that all of those expectations are incorrect," he said.

"It shows a remarkable productivity and influence with some males travelling considerable distances."

He said at a relatively low density (one animal per 10 hectares in suitable habitat) Campbelltown koalas are healthy, long-lived, fertile and dispersing readily.

But despite their dispersal, Tristan Lee's DNA studies have shown sub-optimal levels of genetic variation and little, if any, interaction between local and Southern Highlands populations.

"This may demonstrate the effectiveness of highways in restricting movement," he said.

"There are likely to be pockets of koalas throughout the south of the state at densities similar to Campbelltown's pre-1986 levels.

"If so, the next 20 years could see a revival of koalas across NSW.

"Such a revival of course requires conservation of habitat.

"Highways and railways (VFT) must be designed to allow passage of wildlife so that genetic diversity can be maintained."

To all the science, Dr Close added some gut feelings.

"I suspect our koalas have survived because of the protection of the Georges River and O'Hares Creek gorges," he said.

"Fire seems to leave many unburnt areas in the gorges despite the intensity elsewhere and the cliffs provide shelter first from heat on a hot day (and then coincidentally from the ensuing fire).

"I suspect that over the next five years that Campbelltown's koala population will fill all the available habitat — leading to more young animals moving into the suburbs and more mortalities from cars and dogs and possibly more disease.

"Our research group is working at capacity and we don't know how we'll cope with more calls.

"Our biggest questions now are to know the status of koalas between St Helens Park and Appin and also in the Holsworthy army firing range."

Report koala sightings on the UWS pager: 9962 9996. Also let the Advertiser know on 4640 5151.

MAC KOALA COLUMN PAGE 20



Justing hanging around: A koala that made our front page in 2008, as it sat in a tree watching the activities of McPherson Place in Ruse. **Picture: Luke Fuda**



Waking up to a beauty: St Helen the koala in the Frost's backyard. **Picture: Rebecca Frost**

Joy of urban wildlife

By **Scott Dougherty** *MacAd 8/12/10*

LAST Thursday at around 2am Rebecca and Greg Frost heard a loud noise coming from their St Helens Park backyard – it sounded like someone was breaking in.

When they went outside to inspect, they realised it wasn't human and thought it was either a cat or a possum.

But as they got closer, they realised it was a lot larger – a koala was in their suburban backyard.

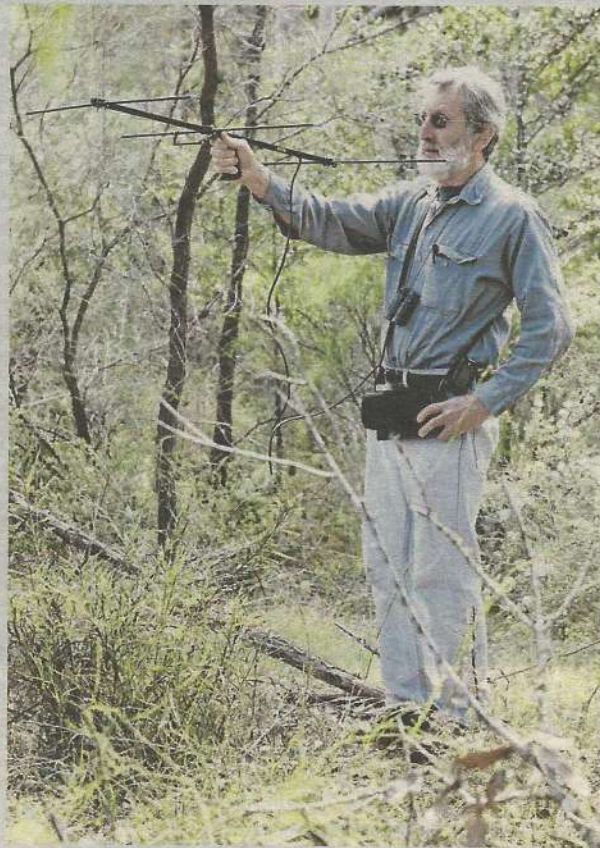
"It ran around the back for a while until it realised we had dogs and it then was clinging on for dear life on a little lilly pillie we have growing in the yard," Mrs Frost said. "It then managed to climb its way up the fence and sat there until 6am."

They phoned the University of Western Sydney, who arranged for the koala rescue team to come and collect it.

Advertiser columnist Dr Robert Close tagged the koala, placed a tracking device on her and aptly named her St Helen, after the suburb where she was found.

MAC KOALA PAGE 32

koala alert



Koala expert reviews 15 years of tales

The final lecture in the Macarthur Heritage Lecture Series will feature the Advertiser's koala columnist Rob Close. Dr Close (here electronically tracking the local marsupials) has written our *Mac Koala* column for 15 years and pioneered the research which gave rise to the column. He will speak about the stories that didn't get printed and draw some conclusions and lessons to be learnt about the national importance of the local koala studies at the Campbelltown Arts Centre on Wednesday, November 10, at 7.30pm. Entry is by gold-coin donation.

Details: Julie, 4636 6301 or Beth, 4625 1583.

MAC KOALA COLUMN PAGE 22 *3/11/10*



Susan was retrieved from a Ruse backyard in 2008.

20/7/10
Chron

Picture: ROBERT POZO

Koalas just love our tasty trees

■ From Page 1

Mr Reid said Susan had caused some excitement in his household due to the Chinese exchange students staying there last week.

Koala expert and University of Western Sydney associate professor Robert Close took Susan for a check-up on Saturday before releasing her back into bush near Mr Reid's house.

Dr Close was also called in to handle Susan in 2008.

"The fact that she's come back to suburban areas is interesting

and I'm wondering if they're coming in for the selection of trees which can be found in backyards and local reserves," Dr Close said.

"There were no obvious external injuries and she has a little joey in her pouch. I released her near where she was found because I wanted to make sure she was in familiar country and somewhere I can go to check on her to ensure she is OK."

Dr Close said Susan's joey was proof that local koala colonies were thriving and encouraged people to be aware of the native

animals that could appear in their backyards.

"It's further proof that the koala colonies are doing well out here at Campbelltown," he said.

He said if people saw a koala and there were no dogs involved, they should leave them alone.

If a koala is distressed, phone the UWS pager line 9962 9996 and a member of the UWS koala team will be notified.



KOALA VISITOR: See more pictures of Susan's exploits in Ruse over the years at macarthurchronicle.com.au

Unexpected visitor tags Harry's name



The drama unfolds: the koala is found (from left) in an Airids backyard before Robert Close returns it to safety and he is named Harry after the man who found him.

DAVID CAMPBELL

THE young untagged male koala found in Airids last month has been named Harry in honour of the resident who found him.

Harry Mortimer said he was shocked to find a koala in a tree in his Riverside Drive backyard last month.

"We've been living here for 33 years and have never had a koala in our backyard before," he said.

"We heard a couple of magpies squawking their heads off about 6.30am and when we went outside we could see him climbing up one of our trees."

Mr Mortimer's discovery follows the sighting of Ruse koala Susan in July this year after a two-year absence.

Residents also reported two male koalas battling over a Long Point gum tree in September.

Mr Mortimer said he called the University of Western Sydney's koala team following the surprise discovery of the fluffy grey mammal.

He said he had a bit of a laugh when the suggested name for the koala was his own.

"I was told the koalas usually get named after the person who found them and seeing it was a

male he's been called Harry," he said.

Koala expert and university Assoc Prof Robert Close inspected Harry at the end of October and said he weighed 8.5kg and was three or four-years-old.

"We think he probably wandered into the backyard to establish his own territory to get away from other bigger males in the area," he said.



FURRY FRIENDS: See our picture gallery of Harry the koala and tell us if you have seen any koalas in your area at macarthurchronicle.com.au

Harry after

Pictures: ROBERT POZO

Chronicle 9/11/10

The school I work at, Woodland Road Public School, has had koalas in the trees in the past, one just last year, on a tree overlooking the small block of shops next door. I believe WIRES takes them back to a safer place each time. I feel for the koalas when so much of their environment is now developed.

Te're Melrose
Macarthur Chronicle
Facebook

Koalas bear heavy load in suburbia

UNIVERSITY of Western Sydney koala expert Robert Close said the Airids koala (pictured) showed the health of the Campbelltown koala population.

"What it's indicating is all the prime spots along the bushland at the Georges River have been taken up by others so the younger koalas have to find somewhere else," he said.

"We see Campbelltown as a growth centre for koalas because the population seems to be spreading north and south along the Georges River.

"Now Harry (see adjacent report) has his tags and we will be able to chart his growth and progress as people recognise him across the area."

Dr Close released Harry in bushland near the Georges River at Kentlyn.

Any resident who sees a distressed koala should phone the UWS pager line on 9962 9996 and a member of the UWS koala team will be notified.

Babyjoy

Susan the koala now a mum



Simon Reid is thrilled to meet Susan the koala in his Ruse backyard.

Our front page report on Susan's first appearance in Ruse in 2008.



DAVID CAMPBELL

Mac Chron

Reid was delighted to find Susan in his backyard – with a joey in her pouch – on Friday. “I have a beautiful native garden at my home which backs on to the bushland at Ruse and on Friday night we had a somewhat unusual visitor,” he said. “The dogs were barking like crazy in the darkness and it looked like there was another dog in the yard but as I got closer I realised it was a koala.”

■ To Page 6

KOALA CENTRAL

- **WHAT:** Koala populations throughout the Campbelltown area are doing well
- **WHY:** Awareness and pristine bushland areas are helping keep the populations strong
- **WHERE:** St Helens Park, Wedderburn, Kentlyn, Ruse, Minto, Bradbury and Airds bushland

Macarthur Chronicle 24th July 2010

Thieves steal stuffed koalas from uni labs

TWO stuffed koalas have been stolen from biology labs at the University of Western Sydney, Campbelltown. These taxidermied animals have been used extensively as a local education resource and were used to help with protests against a proposed Holsworthy airport in the 1990s.

Both koalas had originally lived locally. The first had been hit by a vehicle on Wedderburn Road, the other was euthanased after a bite - delivered during a fight with another male - had broken and infected its upper arm.

FULL STORY PAGE 86

21/4/10



Showing the way in research and development: Dr Robert Close with koala that is part of his research at University of Western Sydney



Gum leaves are greener: Simon Reid in his backyard with Susan the koala

Daily Telegraph 4/7/10

Urban koala's return visit

FOR some people you can't beat a home in the bush. But Susan the koala prefers life in the 'burbs.

When Simon Reid found Susan in the garden of his home at Ruse, in Sydney's southwest, he thought it was her first contact with humans.

But it seems the matey marsupial can't get enough of her neighbours. Susan first made headlines in Septem-

ber 2008, when found in a nearby yard.

Fit and healthy, weighing in at 5kg, Susan was tagged and released back into the wild by Sydney koala expert Professor Robert Close. The same thing happened again in November 2008.

Professor Close examined Susan on Saturday, before releasing her in the bush and said: "She now weighs 7.5kg and has a joey in her pouch."

Columns

Advertiser

Two stuffed koalas stolen

By Robert Close and Tristan Lee

LABORATORY staff at the University of Western Sydney, Campbelltown, recently discovered that our two stuffed koalas had been stolen from the biology labs.

These koalas, prepared by local taxidermist Roger Carris, had over many years been used at schools, talks and events such as Riverfest.

One had even been paraded, as if on a funeral procession, in a public protest against the proposal to build Sydney's second airport in the Holsworthy firing range.

The first koala had been hit by a vehicle on Wedderburn Road while the other was euthanased after a bite during a fight with another male had broken its upper arm.

Mr Carris removed and tanned the skins and with plaster, wire and polystyrene sculpted the shape of the animal into a life-like pose with artificial eyes and sewed the skin over the model.

Taxidermy is an exacting and labour-intensive skill.

Did the thieves steal the koalas for a prank?

MAC KOALA

Can we expect photos of the koalas in exotic places? This theft was not a student prank. The loss occurred in a non-teaching period during which the labs were open for equipment to be moved.

■ On a brighter note, we congratulate Lynn Bowden on her well-earned heritage medallion that was presented at the heritage forum at the Campbelltown Art Centre on Thursday. Ms Bowden has devoted much time and energy to our work with koalas and we have depended on her skills, enthusiasm and her skills in communicating with the community.

■ We would like to advertise a Stream Care project, run by Campbelltown Council, that started on Sunday in the home-range of radio-collared koala Courtney in Spring Creek, St Helens Park, where volunteers began the hard task of weed removal. They will meet monthly and if Courtney is



MAC KOALA

with Dr. Rob Close



macarthuradvertiser.com.au

Read about our local koalas online on Robert Close's blog.

nearby she will be located at the start of each session. The council also has a Stream Care project at Noorumba Reserve, Rosemeadow, and is starting two others in Botany Place, Kentlyn (in the home-range of Curl's mother, Charlotte), and Redfern Reserve, Ingleburn. Volunteers are needed. Please ring: 4645 4601. Learn skills and help restore the natural environment.

If you spot a koala - live or dead - call the UWS pager, 9962 9996.

Curls' adventures are over

The adventurous koala that Campbelltown has followed for months has been killed by a car.
Alexandra Beech reports.

LAST month, Robert Close said he hoped Curls the koala would not head towards busy Appin Road, where another young male koala had been killed by a car.

Last week, he received the dreaded pager message to say a koala with Curls' tags had been hit. The koala that Campbelltown people took to their hearts died the following afternoon, apparently from internal injuries.

"So ended a short but adventurous life," said Dr Close, a koala researcher from the University of Western Sydney, in this week's Mac Koala column on page 28.

The Advertiser has closely followed Curls' adventures, beginning when she left her mother Charlotte about a year ago and

went on to travel more than 13 kilometres with many locals phoning in to track her progress.

Last October, she spent some time in Airds. By December St Helens Park resident Julie Wasson spotted Curls in Lynwood Park, high up in a telephone pole in front of her home.

The Mac Koala columnists decided to leave Curls there.

She moved to Woodlands Road and after two weeks moved back to Airds where her misadventures involved the police, the fire brigade, WIRES, Sydney Wildlife Group, school children and local residents.

We feared for her safety in March after people were seen throwing stones at her and she disappeared.



Sad end: Curls, pictured last month with Dr Robert Close and koala spotters Bridie and Kasey Wasson.

But Curls eventually reappeared in St Helens Park. The columnists caught her and released her into the bush off Fullerton Crescent. She was last seen in late April near the Shell service station off Appin Road - where she was hit.

If you spot a koala call the UWS pager on 9962 9996. Those who find injured wildlife can call WIRES on 1300 094 737.

[Curls the koala dies] What tragic news about Curls. I had seen her at the Quick Stop shops in Woodland Road high up in the tree. I have read before about problems with the paging system not working properly. Can something be done about a new system that would work a lot better? Maybe Curls could have been saved if the pager had worked. - Blue



Curls the koala is safe!

PAGE 3



Safe and sound: Curls the koala with Dr Robert Close and young spotters, Bridie and Kasey Wasson.

Curious Curls found up a telephone pole

McAd 7/4/10

Our missing koala - last seen being attacked with rocks in Airds - has been found. **Alexandra Beech** reports.

CURLS the koala is safe.

On Monday morning, Rob Close from the University of Western Sydney received a pager call to say the koala was up a telephone pole in Wedderburn.

"It was quite exciting," Dr Close told the *Advertiser*.

"It was a relief really; a great relief."

The fate of two-year-old Curls had gripped the community for weeks.

She went missing after youths threw rocks at her near Airds High School in March.

It was the biggest hit story on our website, and a public appeal for help in finding the marsupial was made.

It was a success.

Dr Close said Curls was found in excellent condition and had travelled more than a kilometre from the site of the attack.

To keep her out of trouble, Dr Close decided to catch her and release her in the bush off Fullarton Crescent in St Helens Park where a patch of bushland has become vacant after the death of Brittany.

"I've moved her but we don't know what will happen next," he said. "I guess that's part of the excitement."

He said he wanted to thank everyone who had kept an eye out for Curls over the past year while she has been searching for a place to stay.

For the full account of Curls' discovery see our Mac Koala column on page 26.

Curly is missing

MacAd 3/3/10

Can you help find a koala that youths attacked in Airds last week? **Alexandra Beech** reports.

CURLS the koala is missing after youths threw rocks at her earlier this month.

Researchers say she may be in Smiths Creek Reserve.

Associate Professor Robert Close from the University of Western Sydney received reports of young people throwing rocks at Curly while she was up a tree at Airds High School two weeks ago. When he got there, Curly had gone.

"I didn't see it and by the time we got to the spot the stone-throwers were long since gone and Curly had moved on," said Dr Close, who writes the *Advertiser Mac Koala* column with fellow researcher Tristan Lee [see page 26].

"We haven't seen her since that call last Friday week.

"I'm hoping she's made it into Smiths Creek."

Dr Close said that as far as he knew, there was only one female in that area and plenty of room for Curly, who has been looking for a home for almost 12 months. She ventured recently into urban areas and sparked a lot of community interest and concern.



Missing koala: Curly has not been seen since youths were spotted throwing rocks at her earlier this month, but researchers hope all is well.

"We don't know whether it's because all the places are taken up except in the urban areas or because the trees in backyards provide a more variety diet or maybe because there's more water," Dr Close said.

Curly is now two years old and ready to mate and seemed to have settled in Airds recently.

Dr Close says that anyone who sees a koala in the Smiths Creek Reserve should dial the koala pager. If possible, he or she should also get binoculars

to report the colour of the animal's ear tags to identify it as Curly or the other female in the area, Carrie.

Koalas are a protected species. It is a criminal offence to harm, injure or kill a koala.

Anyone who saw people throwing rocks at a koala should phone the police on 4640 1199.

If you see an injured or a koala that has been attacked, dial Dr Close's koala pager on 9962 9996 or WIRES on 1300 094 737.

Mourning June from Kentlyn

Local koala June died on Friday after being found in the grounds of Kentlyn Public School which she called home. She was 10 years old.

Her daughter Vicki still lives in the school grounds and Dr Close believes June may have returned to the school to spend her final weeks with her daughter. "I do think that animals when they're suffering like to be with somebody," Dr Close said.

June first set up her territory in the area many years ago but then moved away before returning this year. He said he is keen to hear from anyone who saw two koalas together in the school recently on 9962 9996.

For more information see this week's Mac Koala column on page 26.

Campbelltown's damnable enemy

10/3/10 McKe

To mark the Advertiser's 130th birthday, editor Jeff McGill will look at how we've reported on various landmark moments of Campbelltown history. We start with the devastating fires of 1929.

POSSIBLY the worst natural disaster Campbelltown ever suffered was the great inferno of January, 1929.

A series of wild bushfires wiped out farm after farm and turned what is now the suburbs of Minto, Leumeah, Ruse, Kentlyn, Airds, St Helens Park and Wedderburn into smoking charcoal.

Our paper – then known as the *Campbelltown News* – covered the tragedy over four weeks.

Our first front-page report, on January 11, featured the emotive headline "Fire! – Damnable Enemy".

The crisis started about lunchtime on Wednesday, January 9, when Campbelltown Fire Brigade raced out to Wedderburn to fight a blaze which was roaring through the orchards and gorges.

"A tremendous fight followed," we reported. "At one period it appeared that the fighters were cut off, being encircled by the flames." But as that battle raged, a second front erupted in the north.

A spark from a passing train at Leumeah triggered a grass-fire near the station around 2pm. Locals rushed to try to dampen the flames but

in the summer heat they roared out of control and spread across the Leumeah farms.

"The terrific heat and strong wind lifted the flames across the Leumeah Road," we reported.

Several homes were bravely saved by residents but outbuildings, motor lorries and supplies were destroyed.

"The flames then reached the bush country of East Minto [modern Leumeah Heights and parts of Minto] and swept through thousands of acres destroying everything before it. The fire raged with alacrity towards the [Georges] river burning out the Campbelltown Council's sanitary depot and clean swept the home of Mr J. Mardell and all his belongings.

"Old Mrs Crane was carried from her home just before the fire took charge of her property, Mr C. Carter's residence was licked up leaving a mass of twisted iron and golden ashes. Onward the fierce roar of fire leapt hundreds of feet high, eating green trees and shrubs as if they were saturated with inflammable liquids.



Our front-page coverage: One of the ramifications of the inferno was the local realisation that a town-based fire brigade was not enough and in the years ahead volunteer bushfire brigades were formed along Campbelltown's bushland fringes, where they still fight blazes each season, including this blaze (below) which was in St Helens Park.



and often the flames licked them up." The firestorm

threatened the Soldiers Settlement along Waminda Avenue (modern Campbelltown East) but a wind change saved the day. However renewed outbreaks in the days ahead spread further south and reached as far as modern Ambarvale and Rosemeadow, as grassfires raged along Appin Road.

Many were wiped out, such as Mr Mardell who told our editor, Bob Sidman: "Much of my orchard is ruined as well as every stitch we had belonging to us. We have nothing and were not insured against fire." He wasn't alone.

Among the victims was James Carter who told this newspaper: "Sixteen years ago I came to East Minto

and built my home and called it 'Omega' [the last]. Now I'm 82 years and four months old and I'm not going to build myself another. I'm an old-age pensioner, I have no banking account and I'm not covered in my loss by insurance. All I have is what I'm standing in."

The train engine that started the main blaze was owned by NSW Railways but the conservative State Government refused to pay any compensation.

Instead, Campbelltown Council was left to arrange fund-raisers for the worst-affected local farmers but it was only a token help.

Dozens of families were simply left destitute, only months before the collapse of the New York Stock Exchange and the onslaught of the Great Depression.



One of our curious marsupials visiting local schools: Local koala Amica, photographed when he was first found beside Woodland Road Public School with an injured claw.

Koalas drop in for a look – and more

mate 3/2/10

There have been some “intruders” at our locals schools – but there’s no need to call the cops. **Alexandra Beech** reports.

LOCAL koalas often move into school playgrounds while students are on holidays and this year it was female koalas Curly and Vicky who came out to play.

Dr Robert Close, of the University of Western Sydney, said the collar on Vicky that tracked her movements showed she was a regular attendant at faraway Kentlyn Public School.

“It shows she actually uses the school as a home base and goes out on little forays from there,” said Dr Close, the longtime author of the weekly Mac Koala column in the *Advertiser*.

Last month, Curly became the first koala visitor to Airs High School and last year she entertained pupils at Woodland Road Public School in St Helens Park.

Dr Close said Curly had gone into people’s gardens too.

He said koalas were also sometimes seen at Leumeah

High School and even at Ambarvale High School.

Dr Close said koalas came to Kentlyn Primary School so often that the pupils hardly bothered to mention it.

“Our colony animals have been living around Kentlyn Primary School since 1996 – at least when Lyn first arrived,” he said.

“We’ve had a number of sightings where kids have said ‘I think there are koala droppings in our backyard’ and the parents say ‘Don’t be silly’.

“And, of course, they go out

and there’s a koala sitting up in the tree.”

Dr Close said koalas liked going to the premises of primary schools because they provided food and shelter.

“It’s a real smorgasboard because you’ve got lots of native trees and lots of plant trees so you’ve got lots of variety and also there are no dogs there so the trees are big and they’re mature,” Dr Close said.

“We tend to find them more in the holidays but we’ll still find them there during term time.”

Dr Close wants anyone who sees a koala to leave it alone and ring the koala pager, 9962 9996.

MAC KOALA PAGE 24

A friendly and welcome ‘invasion’

JUST two decades ago our koalas were still a fragile colony in the Wedderburn bushland.

Local residents and Campbelltown Council were locked in a bitter three-year war with developers Yap Yan Pin to save them from the bulldozers. The campaign was won, the UWS began scientifically researching and tracking the marsupials and today the expanding koalas are “invading” our streets, backyards and schools.

They are mostly seen in bush-fringed suburbs like Kentlyn and Ruse but also as far away as Bradbury and Rosemeadow.

Koalas heading south

MacAd 23/9/09

Campbelltown's famous koala colony is no longer just in Campbelltown. Ashley Jarquin reports.

MORE than 20 years after the original koala colony was discovered in Wedderburn, the animals are now "invading" suburbia and regularly spotted in backyards and streets in Ruse, St Helens Park, Kentlyn and Bradbury.

But it seems the gum forests of Wollondilly Shire are also grabbing their attention.

Last month, a koala nicknamed Lucky was found by workers at Technology Drive in Appin.

The hungry visitor had crept into their work compound overnight looking for food and got trapped behind the barbed wire fence.

Koala expert and tracker Robert Close from the University of Western Sydney said we can expect more sightings as the koalas continue to spread.

"It seems koalas are dispersing further south from Campbelltown breeding areas and north from breeding areas near Wilton and the Cataract River Catchment," Dr Close said.

"We are getting regular road kills around Pheasants Nest and Wilton and more live reports from Mittagong."

Among the eucalyptus and water gums, the local koala breeding area is located along the Georges River, in a narrow strip around 300 metres to four kilometres wide.

As the number of koalas along the Georges River continues to grow, it seems they're heading further along the banks searching for new accommodation.

"We have 140 koalas from Campbelltown that have been tagged," Dr Close said.

"If half of those are females, we can expect to see 50 to 70 new cubs a year. My feeling is if koalas are on the rise in Campbelltown, they'll



Radio tracking tagged koalas: Dr Robert Close searches for koalas on the move across our city.

Picture: Luke Fuda

'Our koalas are venturing deeper into the suburbs in search of unoccupied territory. Be prepared to see a koala in your own backyard soon.'

Dr Robert Close

be on the rise in other areas."

Dr Close has been tracking and monitoring koalas in the area for decades, his early research work sponsored by the *Advertiser*.

Mac Koala continues to be a popular weekly column (see page 20) and earlier this month eight calls of sightings came in on the UWS pager on one weekend - probably an all-time record.

Dr Close also pondered recently whether the movements of a large male, Price, across Junction Road might be in response to a female in Smiths Creek Reserve - "which has never held a resident female, as far as we know".

"If so, it is further evidence that our koalas are venturing deeper into the suburbs in search of

unoccupied territory," he said.

Now he is urging residents to keep a watch for the native animals.

"Keep an eye out on the roads and attend to any unusual dog barking which may indicate a koala is paying your home a visit."

If you see a koala, report it to the UWS pager on 9962 9996.



Hanging around: A recent snap from our local koala experts.

- The initial koala colony was discovered by the Macarthur branch of the National Parks Association at Wedderburn, near O'Hares Creek Gorge, in 1986.
- A famous local environmental campaign was fought between 1988 and 1991 to stop a housing estate in the koala habitat. After years of court battles, picket lines and headlines in the *Advertiser* the battle was finally won.
- Dr Robert Close of UWS began his exhaustive research program, catching the animals and fitting them with tiny radio transmitters to accurately confirm their eating patterns and corridors of travel.
- To this day, Mac the Koala remains the mascot of the *Advertiser*.

Powerful way to help koalas

Koala experts are impressed, but can AGL win over the community on its gas-fired energy plant proposal for Leafs Gully? **Ilona Marchetta** reports.

IT'S a strain of the mind to imagine anything more out of place with the paddocks and bushland gorges of Leafs Gully farm than the cold, hard steeliness of a power plant.

The only way to access the farm is via a lengthy dirt road that fences off fields full of cockatoos and horses.

It's no surprise then that energy company AGL's controversial application to build a 600-megawatt peaking gas plant on the Gilead property two kilometres south of Rosemeadow and St Helens Park met heavy community opposition in 2006.

The company's decision to withdraw the plan – as the 2007 state election loomed – was viewed with scepticism by a community convinced the plan would reappear when the political coast was clear.

As expected, the plan was resubmitted, albeit with half the megawatts and less greenhouse gas emissions.

However, the new plan has a broader focus than just energy and emissions – this time, it's about koalas too.

The \$200 million plan is based on an Eco Logical Australia report commissioned by AGL and written by Stephen Ward, who completed a PhD in koala ecology based on Campbelltown's population.

The plan proposes to rehabilitate

and protect almost two-thirds of the 280-hectare site, to enhance Leafs Gully as a corridor for koalas travelling between colonies north and south of the site. Evidence of a female koala travelling with a cub through the south of Leafs Gully was found recently.

"The main issues for the koala population in this region are loss of habitat and connection to other koala populations," Dr Ward said. "AGL proposes to protect a considerable piece of koala habitat and to increase the value of a key linkage to other known koala populations."

Dr Ward has advised AGL to widen and extend the corridors by planting thousands of koala feed trees.

It's a far cry from the earlier plan, which would have rehabilitated just 50 hectares of farm land to screen the ugly structure from neighbouring views.

Sceptics however, believe the energy giant has taken the obvious path to winning over its environmental opponents.

But during an on-site tour with the *Advertiser* last week, AGL power development manager Steve Jackson insisted it had more to do with corporate responsibility.

"Our engagement with the local communities in which we invest and work has always been a priority for AGL," Mr Jackson said.



Better idea: Dr Stephen Ward's report influenced the redesign of AGL's proposed gas plant facility for Leafs Gully. **Picture:** Luke Fuda

guidelines. Approval rates under the guidelines tip the odds heavily in AGL's favour.

Despite changing its approach, AGL still has plenty of opponents to win over.

Wollondilly and Campbelltown councils have both reiterated their bitter opposition to the power plant's construction.

In 2006, before being elected to State Parliament, the then Wollondilly mayor Phil Costa led community calls for an independent panel to investigate the proposal.

Last week, Mr Costa said he was still against the plant and had concerns about air quality.

He said he wanted gas scrubbers used to control pollution.

"The Sydney Basin is very polluted at certain times of the year ... it's not reasonable for the people of Macarthur to have additional pollution," he said. "We don't have too many factories in the area that knock out this sort of pollution."

The environmental assessment of the gas-fired power station is open for comment until April 24. Documents can be viewed at www.dtuap.nsw.gov.au.



Destruction: Community members want to know how and why this happened. *26/8/09 mc*

Clearance of land to be investigated

By **Soraiya Gharahkhani**

OUTRAGED community members were seeking answers after several hectares were cleared off Appin Road last week.

The site is near the approved Leafs Gully Power Plant, but Campbelltown Council confirmed it was not on the proposed AGL lot.

The council's director for planning and environment, Jeff Lawrence, said the council was investigating the matter.

"At this stage, the council is not able to provide specific details of the incident until it has completed its detailed investigations," he said.

Koala expert Rob Close said any bushland cleared between Georges River and Nepean River was not good for the environment or wildlife.

"It's important that we maintain the bushland corridor link between the two rivers," Dr Close said.

"This way the koalas can disperse across Sydney. Any clearing of land will reduce the quality of the corridor."

Blinky Bill's rooting racket

Mac Chronicle 2008?
MARJO HALLOWELL

STRANGE noises coming from the bush in Bargo have been identified as koalas' mating calls.

At least two koalas have been reported in the Bargo area.

Wollondilly Council worker John Goodworth spotted a koala (pictured) crossing the road near the Avon and Nepean dams and a resident heard koalas mating on New Year's Eve.

Mr Goodworth stopped and took a photograph of the native animal and reported the incident to koala expert Robert Close, of the University of Western Sydney.

The university's Campbelltown koala unit keeps a data base on the movements of koalas throughout the region.

Tristan Lee, a PhD student, said the unit received reports of koala sightings in Bargo every few months.

"When people report them we can see where they are moving, if they are having babies and keep an eye on the size of the population," he said. "The population appears to be expanding and people are welcome to call in if they hear them or see them."

Koalas were first recorded by white settlers in Bargo in 1798 when John Wilson noted sightings of the koala, wombat and lyrebird.

Wollondilly Council environment officer Alex Stengl said she had a number of reports of koala



sightings, but none had been confirmed.

Environmental scientist Joy Hafey said koalas moved around at night and encouraged dog owners to keep their animals restrained.

"They (koalas) are likely to come into your yard as they have no concept of fences. If they see a tree and they want a feed, they will just help themselves," she said.

"If they are mating then they may be inclined to be on the move so drivers should exercise a little more caution."

Anyone who spots a koala should phone the sighting hotline on 9962 9996.

Anyone who spots an injured koala can phone WIRES on 4684 1656.

■ Have you seen a koala? Email editor@macarthurchronicle.com.au

Koalas find power-ful ally

McA 29/10/08

AGL's proposed gas plant near Campbelltown won an unlikely supporter this week - koala expert Dr Robert Close. **Michelle Taverniti and Ilona Marchetta report.**

ANYTHING that will help Campbelltown's koala population flourish is fine by Robert Close.

Dr Close, who has led studies into the local marsupials for two decades, said he supports AGL's plan - revealed in last week's *Advertiser* - to protect and rehabilitate 170 hectares of a wildlife corridor off Appin Road.

Koalas use this link to move between the Georges and Nepean rivers.

The catch is, the rehabilitation will go ahead only as part of AGL's controversial plan to build a power plant at Leafs Gully, located a few kilometres south of Rosemeadow.

It is part of AGL's revised development application. The original plan was submitted in 2006 but withdrawn due to heavy community opposition.

Dr Close said the enhancement of wildlife corridors was "tremendously vital" in linking koala habitats.

"The reserve proposed by AGL would be a significant step towards achieving this outcome," he said.

"It would also seal off a significant area which may otherwise be sold for urban development. Vegetation in the gap between the rivers should be so that fauna of all kinds can move between the two systems. By crossing under bridges they can make this journey without crossing a major road."

Dr Close received reports of a koala and cub close to the proposed AGL site just last Friday. One of the koalas Dr Close had tagged in Kentlyn, named Dan, made the trip between catchments and was later seen at Douglas Park.

He said these movements were important for the local colony to breed with other populations. Dr Close did not believe the power plant would adversely affect the health of koalas.

The power plant's two gas turbines will use natural gas as fuel and AGL said extensive studies into the effect on air quality and any potential health impact had been carried out.

■ But despite the inclusion of the nature reserve, Campbelltown Mayor Russell Matheson, Wollondilly Mayor Michael Banasik, Campbelltown MP Graham West and Wollondilly MP Phil Costa have reaffirmed their strong opposition to the gas plant.

Their criticisms are largely based on concerns about effect on air quality and the health of local residents.

An AGL spokesman said the company rejected "misinformed comments" on its proposal, stating there was no tangible or credible evidence to support them.

"AGL can confirm that extensive studies have been carried out into the project's effect on air quality and potential health impacts by reputable experts such as the CSIRO and the head of respiratory medicine at the Prince of Wales Hospital," he said. "These studies have made no adverse findings."

The studies will be in the proposal's environmental assessment report released before the end of the year and publicly exhibited for comment.



Supporter: Local koala expert Dr Robert Close, seen here electronically tracking the animals, is backing AGL's plans to establish a wildlife reserve within the company's site for a power plant in Leafs Gully. **Picture:** Jonathan Nge

Feedback on the proposal can be given on 1800 039 600. www.agleafsgully.com.au

Wildlife invasion

McAd 3/9/08

FROM PAGE 1

Dr Close said these suburban areas were becoming more suitable for koalas as planted eucalypt trees matured.

"They're being elbowed out into the fringe places by other koalas," he said.

"In places like Bradbury they can survive quite well with people provided there aren't any dogs or busy roads.

"At present, we're moving invading koalas out of harm's way but as numbers build we will eventually be unable to do this and people will have to share their gardens with koalas.

"This is a great thing for Campbelltonians to boast of."

Only last week, the *Advertiser* reported on a new koala named Balook after the street he was discovered in the south of Bradbury. Another koala which appeared at the Catholic Church in Ruse during World Youth Day events was named Benedict, after the Pope.

CMA chairman Bob Junor said people could help to reduce threats to wildlife.

"Wherever you live in Sydney you're not far from bushland or native wildlife," Mr Junor said last week.

"We need to work together to protect what we have."

The study listed bushfires, public disturbance and water quality among the biggest



Animal rescue: Local koala tracker Alice Fairs, of Ruse, with one of the tagged koalas found on our suburban fringes.

Picture: Wendy Fairs

threats to wildlife in the Dharawal area – the third most sensitive site in Sydney.

The study also stated that rubbish dumping and barbed wire fences posed a threat to local species of flying fox and bat. Three Grey-headed flying foxes were found entangled on barbed wire fences last year, two in St Andrews and one in Denham Court.

The study found 10 per cent of Sydney's wildlife species were under threat.

The boss of Landcare Australia, Brian Scarsbrick, said he was staggered by the results.

"This alarming study is a call to arms for anyone interested in preserving our wildlife to volunteer for their local urban land-care group and help protect and restore the natural habitat of our threatened indigenous wildlife," he said.

"We need to act now if we're going to save the 53 species under threat."

Ingleburn was ranked 40th out of 50 most important at-risk habitat sites in Sydney.

Denham Court was 44th and St Andrews was 49th.

MAC KOALA COLUMN PAGE 24



Roaming Ruse: Susan the koala was found on Darling Avenue in Ruse in August last year. She was tagged and then spotted on Peter Meadows Road six weeks later.
Picture: Wendy Fairs, who has been spotting koalas with Dr Rob Close since 2000.

WILDLIFE INVASION

McAd 3/9/08

FOUR areas in Campbelltown have been identified as being host to "vulnerable" animal species.

Ingleburn, Denham Court, St Andrews and the Dharawal state conservation area (near Wenderburn) are listed in a Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority study as places where wildlife havens are at risk.

Several of 243 animal species in the Dharawal area were endangered: the stuttering frog, the green and golden bell frog, the broad-headed snake and the eastern bristlebird.

The 17 species listed as "vulnerable" included the koala.

But local biologist and UWS professor Rob Close said the koalas in Campbelltown were "doing very well - given what they've got."

A study released on Monday stated that Campbelltown's koala population was "under threat" - but a local biologist said they're doing fine. In fact, they're invading our suburban streets like never before.

Michelle Taverniti reports.

"The population is building up," Dr Close has been watching four generations of koalas and said as long as they had some bushland they would not be under threat.

"If the stretch of the Georges River next to the houses was destroyed, it would put big pressures on the koala population," he said. There have been recent sightings of koalas in the suburban areas of Bradbury and Ruse.

CONTINUED PAGE 6

Furry friends need some neighbourly care

Chron 30/9/08

“KOALAS in Campbelltown? You’ve got to be joking!”

That’s a common reaction from non-locals who find it hard to believe Campbelltown is home for a thriving population of koalas – and they are not too far from the CBD.

Just 12km from the skyscrapers of our city centre to the bushland of the Georges River State Recreation Area is a healthy and mobile koala population.

The koalas, moving around in the native forests bordering the suburbs of Wedderburn, Airds, Ruse, Kentlyn and Bradbury exist in a strip between the Georges River and the housing estates.

The 200 to 300-strong colony is healthier than other populations elsewhere in the state, despite its close proximity to urban areas.

This precious population is lucky to have survived the impact of white man since the region was first explored in the 1800s.

Early residents shot the animals for their pelts and cleared their habitat – almost wiping out the population – but the hardy little creatures have made a comeback since they were rediscovered in 1986.

Our koalas are thriving in



Mandy Perrin

the native forest growing on sandstone shale transition soil near the Georges River.

Unfortunately, they move around in their environment and end up in places they shouldn’t – residential backyards, in school playgrounds and on our roads.

The discovery of a two-year-old female koala in Ruse last week highlights how easily the animals roam into our suburbs.

University of Western Sydney koala expert Robert Close says his team is called almost once a week to rescue koalas from an urban setting.

As far south as Bargo, residents are reporting sightings of the creatures.

In January mysterious noises in Bargo were identified as koala mating calls.

Our city is privileged to have a healthy koala population as a next-door neighbour, particularly as the

animals are fighting for survival across Australia.

The Australian Koala Foundation estimates there are less than 100,000 koalas left in the wild, with some populations severely endangered.

One of the biggest threats to koalas’ survival is loss of habitat and urban development, disease and attacks from other animals such as dogs. Koalas are fussy eaters and consume only a certain type of eucalyptus leaf. When forests are cleared, their food source diminishes.

As neighbours, we have a responsibility to ensure our koalas have the opportunity to grow and thrive in a safe environment.

The Georges River bushland – a slice of koala heaven – must be protected from development at all costs and conserved for future generations.

We also need to keep an eye out for our furry friends and call in the experts if we find a koala visiting our backyards.

■ Mandy Perrin is the editor of the *Macarthur Chronicle*.



Saving Susan

Mac Chron 30/9/08

■ Expert warns residents to be on the lookout for roaming koalas in suburbia

■ Our own Bindi Irwin spots Susan the koala in her Ruse back yard (report: Page 7)



Susan back home

Chron 30/9/08

MARJO HALLOWELL

RUSE may well have found its own Bindi Irwin.

When five-year-old Amy Arthur told her family last Wednesday afternoon there was koala poo at the bottom of the garden they didn't believe it.

"We all looked up into the trees but told her it must just be possum poo," mum Jane said.

But Amy, who had learned about koala scats at school, insisted she was right - and she was.

"The next morning we saw the koala in the tree and realised Amy was right," Mrs Arthur said.

"Seeing your first koala in the wild is very exciting, especially if it's in our own yard."

The family called koala expert Associate Professor Robert Close and he was able to identify the koala as Susan.

The koala was caught and taken to Georges River so she would not get hurt trying to find her way home.

"She growled like you wouldn't believe and all Amy could do was laugh at the noise," Mrs Arthur said.

Mrs Arthur said when she planted natives in her garden she had no idea it would attract so much wildlife.

Rescuers said they were called out to deal with wayward koalas in suburbia at least once a week.



Susan Cook gives her namesake a cuddle after the animal was spotted in Ruse by Amy Arthur, 5.

Picture: ROBERT POZO



TO THE RESCUE

- **WHAT:** Report any koalas found in your garden and along roadways
- **WHY:** To safely relocate koalas to their natural surroundings
- **PHONE:** 9962 9996 and leave a message on the paging service

the health of the Campbelltown colony.

"They are healthy, breeding well and living long even though they have a restricted area between the river and the town," he said.

See more pictures

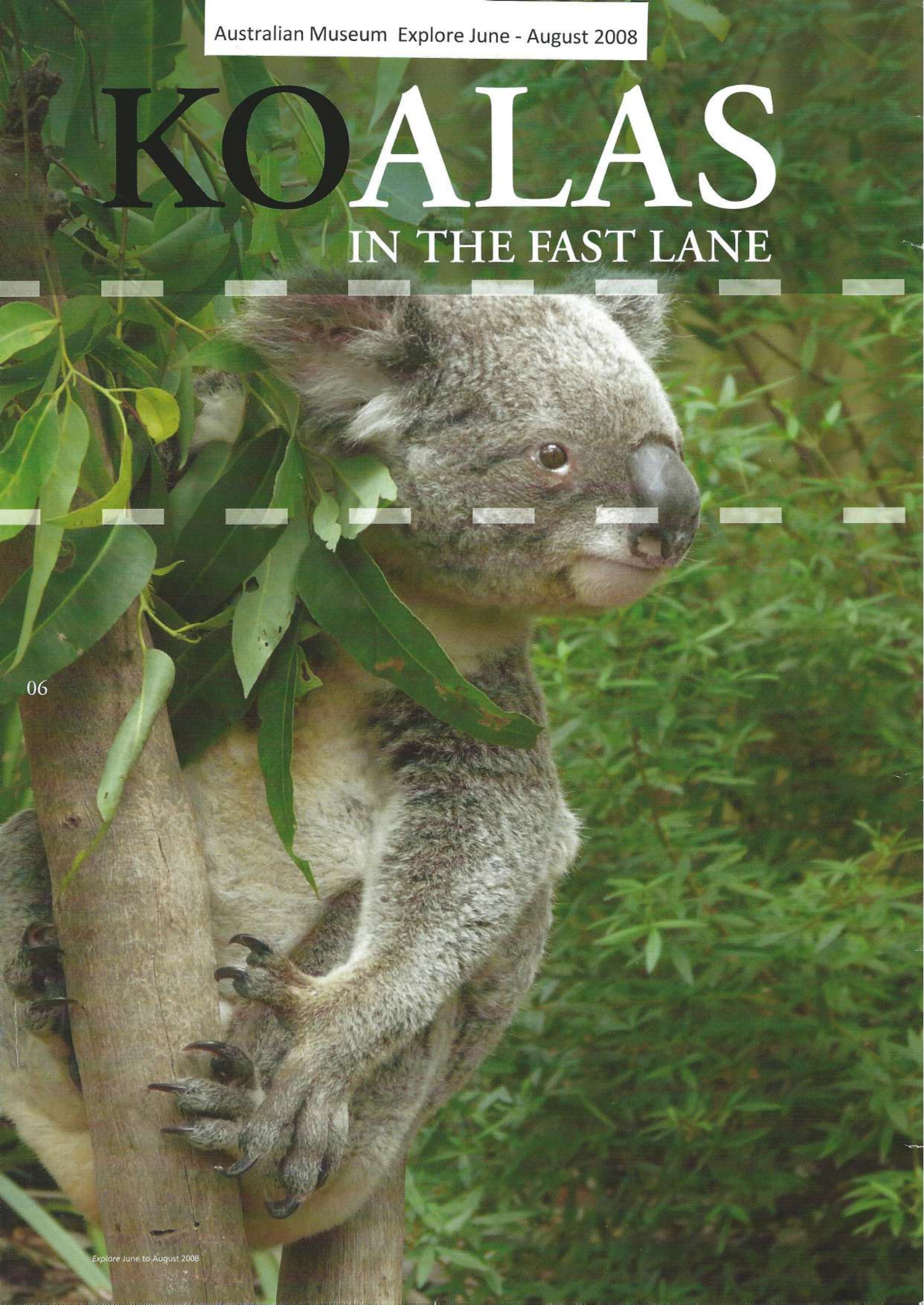
More photographs available at www.macarthurchronicle.com.au



KOALAS

IN THE FAST LANE

06





LIFE AND DEATH ISSUES

Koalas are fundamentally solitary animals occupying home ranges that partly overlap. Male Koalas have larger home ranges than females (at Bongil Bongil they average 23 hectares for males and 15 hectares for females) and males also move further in a day (average 178 metres for males and 102 metres for females).

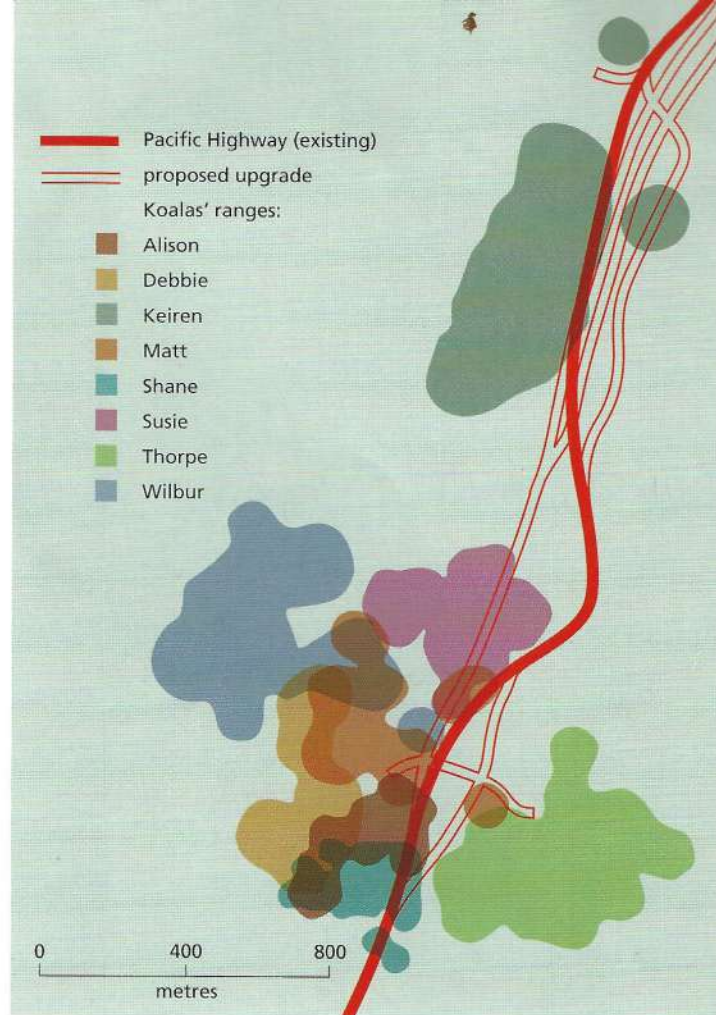
We found that the average home range almost doubled between the pre-construction and construction phases of the study, apparently because habitat clearing led the animals to move further afield in search of new territory. This created a domino effect as they encroached on the home ranges of their neighbours, forcing them to shift a bit too.

08

A total of 82 Koalas were reported dead on the highway at Bongil Bongil between 1990 and 2007, with higher mortalities in the local breeding season of August to October. Of these, about half (51%) were females and 42% were immature. From this information, coupled with genetic data, it seems the majority of Koalas killed on the highway were not locals but animals dispersing from surrounding areas. The deaths were clustered where tracks, trails and side roads meet the highway; apparently, dispersing animals like to follow made tracks.

Twelve of the tracked Koalas have been released from duty, having done their share, while three are still being studied. Some individuals died of diseases (cancer and the viral disease *Chlamydia*), old age and accidents with vehicles. Others apparently died of 'trauma' during the construction phase over territorial disputes with other Koalas.

We found that Koalas living beside the highway seldom cross it, apparently recognising the highway and its structural features as boundaries to their home ranges. But roadside residents crossed the highway more often once their habitat had been cleared. One young male had never crossed the highway before his home range was cleared, but he then crossed in search of a new home. For several months he made an occasional foray back, perhaps to see if his old home had reappeared.



Male Koalas have an average home range of 23 hectares and typically roam 178 metres per day. Map Jeremy Austen, redrawn from AMBS data.

PREVENTION AND PROTECTION

The RTA has now erected fences with special floppy tops around the whole section of highway that dissects the Bongil Bongil forest, with gates from the highway to the tracks and trails. The floppy tops make the fences hard to climb and the one-way gates allow any trapped animals to escape to the forest. Since being erected, the fences seem to have done their job with no further Koala roadkills recorded to date. A planned fauna bridge and several underpasses will allow Koalas and other animals to cross the highway safely. Our study will continue to monitor these structures for effectiveness using surveillance cameras and other techniques – hopefully to document the continued survival of the fast-lane Koalas.

David James is a project manager at Australian Museum Business Services (AMBS), the consulting arm of the Australian Museum. AMBS undertakes fee-for-service consultancy projects about environmental, Aboriginal and historic heritage for private sector and government clients.

Further reading

Lassau S, Ryan B, Close R, Moon C, Geraghty P, Coyle A & Pile J, 2008. Home ranges and mortality of a roadside Koala *Phascolarctos cinereus* population at Bonville, New South Wales. In Lunney D, Munn A & Meikle W (eds), *Too Close for Comfort: Contentious Issues in Human-Wildlife Encounters*. Royal Zoological Society of NSW, Mosman, NSW (in press).

You might think that Koalas live a tranquil existence far from the hustle and bustle of our human world, but some live in the fast lane alongside our major highways, as Museum ecologist David James explains.



CULTURE CLASH

Bongil Bongil National Park features tall, leafy forests nestled in undulating country between the New England Ranges and the Pacific coast just south of Coffs Harbour. Formerly the Pine Creek State Forest, it includes a large expanse of coastal hardwood native forest and plantation timber with a high diversity of eucalypts. The park is home to many species of forest animals, none more iconic than the Koala, *Phascolarctos cinereus*.

For many Koalas, the 4100-hectare forest provides a tranquil home far from the modern world. But for others, home is next to the bustling Pacific Highway which cuts a narrow, winding swathe through a 3.5-kilometre stretch of the forest. In the mid-1990s plans emerged to upgrade this highway accident blackspot to make it safer, straighter and faster with all the bells and whistles. But at what cost to the Koala population?

SURVEILLANCE

The planning and assessment process for the highway upgrade identified that the Koalas might come off second best. Apart from the literal impact of road mortalities, highways can also reduce and fragment the available habitat, creating barriers to the movements and migrations of animals.

left: Understanding home ranges and local movements underpins Koala protection measures at Bongil Bongil National Park. Photo © Peter Street.

above: AMBS consultant Brendan Ryan (left) and UWS Koala researcher Dr Rob Close (right) fitting radio collar to Koala. Photo AMBS.

The Australian Museum, through its consulting arm AMBS, has been studying the Bongil Bongil Koalas for the RTA (the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority) since 1999. This work has aimed to understand the home ranges, movement patterns and habitat preferences of individual Koalas and to assess the threats from the highway upgrade. The study is documenting the causes of death in the population, particularly the frequency of roadkills.

AMBS began the first (pre-construction) phase of the study in September 2000, in collaboration with scientific adviser Dr Rob Close from the University of Western Sydney (UWS), capturing Koalas and fitting them with radio transmitters on collars. Over the following two years, 16 Koalas were tracked through the forests to document their movements, home ranges, habitats, tree preferences and social interactions.

Phase 2, the 'during construction' phase, began in September 2006. Once again we captured and tracked nine individual Koalas. This part of the project will run until 2010, entering the final (post-construction) phase in September 2008.

Apart from radiotracking, there's a lot of other useful information to consider. With wildlife rescue group WIRES, we've compiled data on road mortalities going back as far as 1990. We've also arranged for vets to undertake health checks and autopsies in order to understand the natural background rates of mortality from different causes.

Tristan's koala conservation quest

UNIVERSITY of Sydney student Tristan Lee is on a quest for the conservation of koala habitats.

Mr Lee, 23, has started a PhD on the ecology, genetics and movements of koalas along the Georges River Nature Reserve.

He is based at the university's Wildlife Health and Conservation Centre in Camden.

"Through a combination of radio tracking, genetic analysis and computer modelling, I hope to determine koala movements, mating patterns, population structure, level of genetic diversity and gene flow between populations," he said.

"I suppose the overall aim of my project is to develop management strategies to ensure the long-term survival of local koalas. This could be achieved through measures such as creating and maintaining wildlife corridors between koala populations."

Mr Lee's project involves staff from his and the University of Western Sydney and the NSW Environment Department.

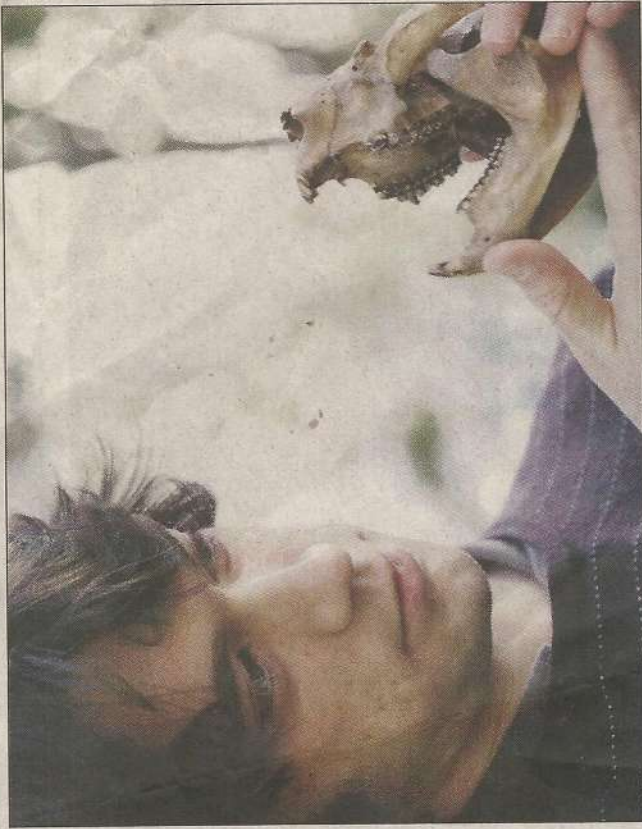
He is seeking access to the Holsworthy army range where little is known about the status of koala habitat.

Mr Lee said conservation of natural habitat would become more important as Sydney expands.

"Eventually, we will have to decide if we want to be able to keep our happy and healthy local koalas, or if we would rather develop the land for more housing," he said.

"Koalas are conservation ambassadors because they are so well-known and loved. They can capture the public's hearts and minds and get them more interested and active in conservation issues."

Report sightings to 9962 9996. Mac Koala column - P28.



Conservation is the key: Tristan Lee is studying all things koala, including their skulls. "We are interested in all koala sightings, in any location, alive or dead," he said.

Picture: Luke Fuda

LOCAL KOALAS



Tristan's quest for conservation

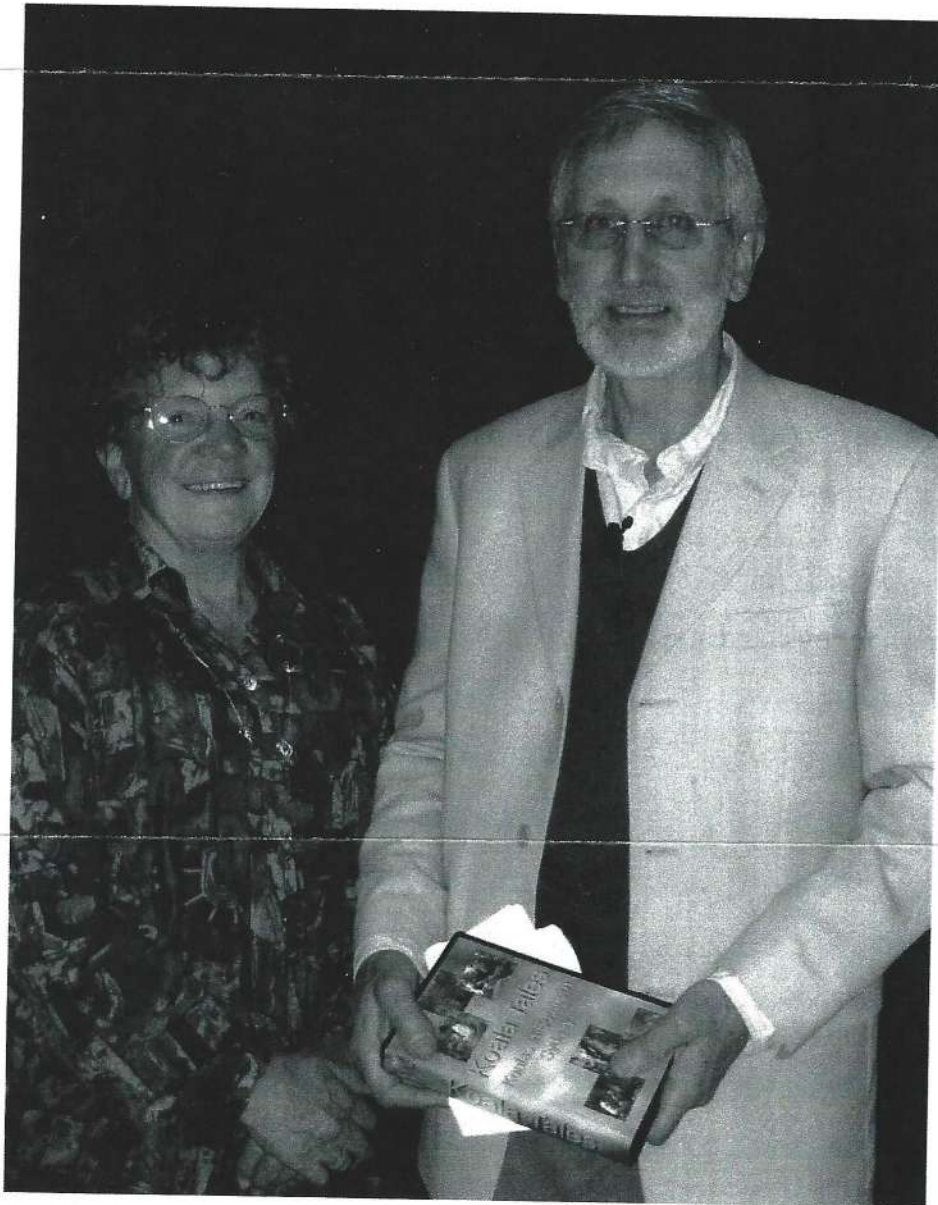
LECTURE SERIES for 2008

The annual lecture series is going again and at this stage they are planned to be held at the Campbelltown Arts Centre, commencing at 7.30pm with entry by a gold coin.

Fourth lecture – *Wednesday 19 Nov* Michael Paul – Birds

Any queries please **contact Beth 4625 1583**

Assoc. Prof. Robert Close presented the third lecture in September on "Research & Reminiscences: 18 years with Campbelltown koalas". This provided the well attended talk with a fascinating background to the koalas in our area.



NPA-Macarthur Branch newsletter October 2008

Beth and Robert Close

CAMPBELLTOWN MACARTHUR Advertiser



CAMDEN Advertiser



The Wests Tigers and the Advertiser are proud to recognise the tireless work and dedication of these 16 Faces of Macarthur.

These everyday people will be honoured for their continued support in the community at the Wests Tigers home ground game on Monday, July 14. It makes clear that the Macarthur area is full of quiet achievers, unsung heroes and proud ambassadors.

Make sure you notice people who you think deserves recognition for next year's selection.

M.H. 9/7/08

ALAN SCOTT



Alan Scott has been a director of Campbelltown Catholic Club for 20 years.

As a welfare officer, he is known for his involvement with many families. Alan has been involved with rugby league. He started when he coached Ingleburn. He later became an identity at the Campbelltown Collegians. Alan was the founder of St Thomas More Football Club, now known as Macarthur Saints. At the Campbelltown school, Alan was a president of the P&C and he coordinated its fetes. He now owns with his son a business called Dad and Dave's Plumbing.

PAUL ALBURY



Paul Albury is a Detective Inspector at Camden Police Station.

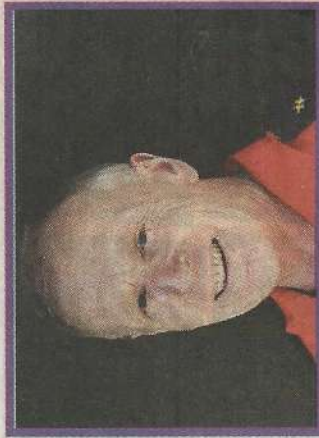
He is a well-respected member of the Camden local area command and has been in the police force for 20 years. As the crime manager, Paul has a variety of responsibilities including the tasking and deployment of police resources. He is also expected to determine how the command responds to crime and he leads the crime management team. Paul lives in the Camden area with his family.

DR ROBERT CLOSE



Robert Close was a professor at the University of Western Sydney, Campbelltown Campus and has recently retired. He is known for his tireless work into researching local koalas and other Australian native animals for about 20 years. Robert started marsupial studies with a PhD project on "Why bandicoots lose a sex chromosome." He then spent a year in the Galapagos Islands before returning to Australia where he researched reproduction of koalas for a year before returning to Macquarie. Robert came to Campbelltown in 1987 and has been studying local koalas and other fauna since 1990.

GEOFF HOOK



Geoff Hook is an SES volunteer, who has previously served the community through education. He is a retired deputy principal and he was the vice-president of the Camden Amateur Swimming Club.

This year he was named Camden Citizen of the Year for his dedication to the community and he spent 40 years teaching students at a number of primary schools in the Camden area.

On Australia Day Camden Mayor Chris Patterson described Geoff as "a role model that citizens of Camden can look up to and aspire to be".

It's people that makes us great

McM 16/4/08



EDITOR'S NOTE
with Jeff McGill

BEING covered in koala poo might not sound like fun – but it is actually one of my fondest memories from my days as a young reporter.

It was the early 1990s, in the midst of the battle to save the core koala colony at Wedderburn, that Dr Robert Close of the UWS invited me into the bush to watch him catch koalas.

This was to check them for signs of disease, and tag them with an electronic collar, to scientifically track their movements.

This was all pioneering stuff, and I was still a bit wet behind the ears and thought I'd actually be standing there with a notebook in my hand, jotting down quotes.

Instead, I found myself holding one end of a small net just in case the furry marsupial jumped out of the tree.

From the uppermost branches, Rob would offer encouraging advice such as, "If you do catch him in the net, make sure you don't get too close to him; his claws could take your face off".

In the end, the koala didn't jump but he was obviously a tad nervous at the bearded academic edging out along the branch toward him, because down below I was covered in a scattering of pellets.

"Don't worry, it's only poo," Rob reassured me.

This was only one of several excursions we made into koala country, and these days – as an editor chained to a computer most of the week – I look back with great fondness to those days.

Rob, of course, has gone on to become a member of the extended *Advertiser* family, co-penning each week the Mac Koala column, one of my favourite sections of the paper. In his early years, we even financially sponsored his research work.

This month, Rob has retired from teaching at the uni (see story on page 6) but he will still be keeping a very watchful eye over his koalas.

In fact, we're looking forward to having more time with him in the near future to do some pretty detailed sticky beaking into his interesting koala trivia.

Well done, Rob, for all your work over the years; you are one of our city's best quiet achievers.

Congrats, also, to Mark Bimskin, on page 1, and all the other achievers in this week's edition.

We might not have harbour views, but we've got great people. jmcgill@fairfaxmedia.com.au

Hallways of time: Rob Close will hang up his teacher's hat after 21 years.

Picture: Luke Fuda

Biologist retires – but won't stop working



Renowned professor Rob Close is retiring from teaching university students – but don't think retirement will stop him from working. **Jessica Mahar** reports.

COUNTLESS people who completed degrees at the University of Western Sydney have been taught and inspired by local biologist Rob Close.

But after 21 years of teaching, Dr Close has retired, leaving him more time to focus on other projects.

He has spearheaded the study of our local koala colony for almost two decades and co-writes a weekly column for the *Advertiser*.

Last week he said he would be made an adjunct professor at the UWS and keep his office.

"It just means I will have that much more time to work and get things published," he said.

"The teaching load is very large and at UWS we're pretty open to students.

"There are so many things I wouldn't want to stop now. It's just the structured teaching I am giving up."

Dr Close said in recent years he hadn't been able to spend as much time with students as he would have liked.

"I really enjoyed teaching, it's quite a privilege to be entrusted with their training," he said.

"At the moment when I walk through the university students call out 'Hi Rob' and I will really miss that."

As he has spent more time indoors and teaching, Dr Close said he's missed going into the bush and researching.

In retirement, he will teach himself to use the geographic information system to map a database of public and tracking notes.

And of course, there is work for him to do at home.

"I will be doing some of the household repairs [and] a bit of digging in the garden," he said.

"Life will just take on a more relaxed pace."

Testing your local knowledge

6/2/08

How well do you know your home town? Try these 60 questions – some easy, some hard – compiled by editor Jeff McGill. **Answers are on page 31.**

- Campbelltown was founded in 1820 by Governor Lachlan Macquarie – but who was it named after?
- One of our landmark early housing estates in the late 1960s and the early 1970s was called *Sherwood Hills*. Which suburb is it today better known as?
- Where is Campbelltown's sister city overseas?
- We are also developing a 'sister' link with which town in mid-west NSW?
- West Tigers is a joint venture of which two rugby league teams?
- What major river flows along the eastern (Kendlyn) side of our city – and where does it enter the sea?
- What major river flows along our south-western boundary (at Menangle Park) and where does it enter the sea?
- Who is Campbelltown's main central library named after?
- When K. Whitten was elected as Campbelltown's mayor in 1961, why did it make headlines around NSW?
- Who is the present mayor of Campbelltown?
- Which Aboriginal tribe is considered the traditional custodians of the Campbelltown area?
- What was famously located around Waminda Avenue in Campbelltown East between 1918 and 1960?
- Dumaresq Street is pronounced: a) "Dumar-esk" b) "Du-merick" c) "Dumar-ow"
- What major land feature skirts the western side of Raby, Kearns, Eschol Park and Blairmount?
- The freeway just south of Campbelltown has two bridges – one named the Jim Affleck Bridge, and the other the Mark Evans Bridge. Who were these men?
- Before it was turned into a recreation reserve, what regular mining activity took place at Simmo's Beach in Macquarie Fields?
- Dr Robert Close from the Campbelltown campus of the University of Western Sydney has been conducting high profile research into what native animal since 1989? He writes a column for the Advertiser.
- Who was famously quoted as saying: "There are only two great cities in the world – Rome and Campbelltown"?
- Who was hanged for the 1826 murder of Fred Fisher?
- Which suburb is Ambarvale High School located in?
- True or false? Ingleburn once had its own town council.
- What is our approximate population; a) 70,000; b) 110,000; c) 140,000?
- Was the name originally proposed for the suburb of Bow Bowling: a) Meehan Vale b) Bow Meadow c) Saggart Field
- Kevin Wheatley of Campbelltown became famous in death in 1965. Why?



Clue for question 1: A statue of our city's namesake stands in Mawson Park.



Clue for question 18: This very vocal solicitor (left) died in 2006.



Clue to question 32: Students at Hurfstone planting trees. The agricultural high school was once located much closer to Sydney.

- Name two of the 15 councillors. Wedderburn, Gilead and Menangle Park are our southern-most suburbs. But what is our northern-most suburb?
- Ron Moore and his family for years owned Minto Hardware. Which major local business do they now own?
- Name the local man who last retired last year as NSW police commissioner.
- As the crow flies, which is closer to Campbelltown – Cronulla, Parramatta, Penrith or Bowral?
- Streets in Raby include Swordfish Avenue, Moth Place and Walrus Place. Are they named after: a) animals b) aircraft c) movie and song titles.

- Rudd Road in Leumeah is named after Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's family. True or False?
- Hurlstone Agricultural High School in Glenfield recently marked its centenary, but it has only been in the local area since 1926. Where was it before then?
- Campbelltown women Heather Garriock, Sarah Burgess and Jo Burgess led the Fisher's Ghost Festival parade last year. Why?
- Three local business leaders – Ken Tagg, Peter Donnelly and Carlos Broens – were inducted into the Macarthur Business Hall of Fame last September. What businesses are they connected with?
- Which is the only suburb in Campbelltown that was divided from the rest of our city by a boom gate?
- Campbelltown High School opened in 1956, but was actually founded two years earlier in 1954. Where were classes originally held?
- What is the oldest school in Campbelltown?
- The local government area of Campbelltown shares a boundary with four other councils – Wollondilly, Camden, Liverpool and...?
- What annual event in Campbelltown sees large crowds walking around and around the athletics stadium in Leumeah to raise money for local cancer care?
- What is historic Dredge's Cottage in Queen Street used as?
- Cryptic question: Why could we describe Woobine as a "seaside address" even though it is 40 kilometres from the coast?
- Rose Payten Drive links Woodbine and Leumeah. Who was Rose Payten?

Save our koalas: a plea to candidates

Oct 17 2007

By Jessica Mahar

THE upcoming federal election is not just about workplace laws, health and global warming.

The latest campaign that candidates are being asked their views on is koalas – and how they will aim to conserve them in their electorate.

As part of the Australian Koala Foundation's koala conservation initiative, all candidates are being asked to publicly declare their level of commitment for koalas.

And one seat viewed as being very important in that regard is Macarthur, based on southern Campbelltown.

According to the foundation, Macarthur contains 500 koalas and about 27 per cent of prime koala habitat.

Candidates were sent five questions which included issues such as koala-friendly housing estates, saving remaining native vegetation and koala protection.

Out of four Macarthur candidates, only the Greens' Ben Raue has received full marks, with the others either not returning the survey or "failing" it.

It was recently pointed out that the union green bans which helped save local koalas back in the early 1990s would now be illegal under the Howard Government's controversial workplace laws.

But Liberal MP Pat Farmer said he supported the work done for koalas by organisations such as the Nationals Parks and Wildlife Service and University of Western Sydney.

"The National Koala Conservation Strategy aims to conserve koalas by retaining viable populations in the wild throughout their range by providing a framework to guide the conservation of



Koala questions: Macarthur's Liberal MP Pat Farmer with his challengers this election (from left) Labor candidate Nick Bleasdale, Greens candidate Ben Raue and Democrat candidate Sam Elliott-Halls.

koalas in Australia," he said. "The Advertiser's support of this important issue has also been integral in bringing the region's koala population and its preservation to the fore – and to the attention of people like myself."

Labor candidate Nick Bleasdale said if elected, a Rudd Government would undertake an urgent scientific review.

"If up-to-date expert advice indicates the koala should be listed as vulnerable under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, then Labor will undertake this listing," he said.

Ben Raue of the Greens said: "It's not particularly hard to tick a couple of boxes when you live in an area with a significant koala population. We've been campaigning against development. People don't move here to live in the inner city."

Democrat Sam Elliott-Halls said: "We're losing so much local habitat and it's causing a greater risk to the koalas."

Renowned koala scientist Rob Close has studied koalas in Campbelltown for more than 15 years and said the koala was used as a "flagship" for other species.

"Certainly the fact that we've got the marvellous frontage from the Georges River that happens to connect with prime koala habitat [is significant]," he said.

"It's the habitat issue that's the main thing and the whole issue of corridors and linking green patches. There are some terrific animals in that spot, including pygmy possums, sugar gliders, swamp rats, ringtail possums and brush-tailed possums."

He said people in Macarthur should consider themselves "remarkably lucky" to have koalas almost in our backyard.

"Koalas have got huge pulling power," he said.

"We've got continuous bushland for a huge area and that comes through the Campbelltown area.

"We are particularly fortunate to still be able to do something about linking up bushland."

Chief executive of the foundation, Deborah Tabart, said she was staggered by the severity of the koala situation in Australia.

"Research, both ours and government's, has been showing an overall decline in koala populations for some time now, however, upon further investigation of this data it has become clear that the plight of the koala is actually far more serious than we had originally predicted," she said.

■ Details: www.savethekoala.com/actoraxe/actelectorates/nswmacarthur.html

Mac Koala column, page 30

High drama as developers move in

This week we continue our look at the battle in the early 1990s to save the Wedderburn koala colony from a housing development. **Jeff McGill** reports.

AFTER two years of verbal warfare and court battles, the Indonesian-based developer Yap Yan Pin was still armed with the legal right to build a new housing estate at Wedderburn. The only thing that had delayed them through 1990 was a controversial "green bar" placed on the site by the Construction Forestry Mining and Electrical Union (CFMEU).

This stopped anything - from bricklaying to electrical connections - going ahead. For a while.

But at the start of 1991, the developers moved in - with non-union contractors - to build a sealed road into the bushland site. On January 15, protesters and bulldozers came face to face. The problem was, these protesters were not radical green warriors. They were local politicians, mums and dads, retired folk - even kids.

So when the police moved in to clear the way ahead for Yap Yan Pin, there was no need for tear gas or riot shields. After 10 minutes of symbolic defiance, the line of protesters were simply - and non-violently - moved aside, after a police sergeant told everyone to heed his warning.

Mayor Jim Kremer's last-ditch tactic involved planting a row of native trees in front of the entrance - making note of council's tree preservation policy. This failed, when non-union contractors simply drove their trucks straight over the trees. And so these contractors, who dismissed the protesters as "rent-a-crowd", began building the road. Campbelltown ratepayers had so far spent \$80,000 fighting the developer through the courts, and the only body left able to step in was the Liberal state government - and for a third time it flatly refused to do so.

To even the most hardened campaigners, it now seemed as if the battle had finally been lost.

From all backgrounds: Young protesters Nicholas and Matthew Diugon on the picket line at Wedderburn in January 1991.



12/9/07 Me At

1991 protests: Some protesters making their opinion clear, including (at centre) Julie Sheppard from the National Parks Association, councillor John Hennessey, activist Sue Dobson and former ranger Keith Longhurst.

That is why it was considered a miracle when, just one week later, Yap Yan Pin was forced into receivership. The Australian Tax Office had taken legal action against the developer over unpaid taxes and penalties.

The Wedderburn land as a result fell into the hands of a Singapore bank - which publicly indicated it would "re-evaluate" the situation.

The koala campaigners were now recharged, and determined that the newly-built road would be "the best fire trail in NSW - and nothing more".

NEXT WEEK THE FINAL VICTORY

Close thing as research prevailed

BY 1990-91, the koala campaigners had another influential ally - Robert Close of the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur.

Despite the years of struggle to protect the marsupials, relatively little was still known about them or their habitat. All that changed when Dr Close began an exhaustive research program and was busy catching koalas, checking them for disease and fitting them with tiny radio transmitters to accurately confirm their eating patterns and corridors of travel.

The Advertiser launched a weekly koala column, created a mascot - Mac the Koala - and began financially sponsoring the work of Dr Close and his research assistant, Stephen Ward.



Koalas in the news: The Advertiser led the way in not only its coverage of the koalas, but also helping to support the work of Dr Robert Close.

Paradise is regained

Macarthur Advertiser 19th September 2007

This week we conclude our look at the long battle to save the Wedderburn koala colony. **Jeff McGill** reports.

WITH police moving aside the last line of community protesters in January 1991, the developer, Yan Yan Pin, moved in to build a road into its planned executive housing estate.

But that is as far as it got. It was considered a miracle when just a week later the developer was forced into receivership after the Australian Taxation Office took action over unpaid taxes and penalties.

The site of the increasingly famous Wedderburn koala colony now fell into the hands of a Singapore bank, which had no real interest in the controversial housing estate and indicated it was willing to re-evaluate the whole situation.

During the ensuing limbo of negotiations, Dr Robert Close of the University of Western Sydney continued his exhaustive research into the colony and his data added weight to the existing concerns.

Robert Close is now an associate professor at the University of Western Sydney.

By late 1993, it was acknowledged the range of the colony was expanding well beyond the Wedderburn core, with koalas being found as far away as Kentlyn.

The *Macarthur Advertiser* was actively backing Dr Close's work and took then opposition leader Bob Carr on an inspection of the koala habitat with local environmentalists.



Our famous marsupials: Some of the koalas being monitored and documented by Robert Close and his team.

reserve land (donated by the developer as a sweetener in 1989) to the National Parks and Wildlife Service as part of a koala sanctuary.

But it wasn't until September 2004 that the Carr Government finally fought-over land alongside the O'Hares Creek Gorge as part of Dharawal State Conservation Area.

This left open a vital habitat for a thriving colony - while providing a migration route to link with koalas at Woronora and Heathcote.

Through a mix of public and media protest, union solidarity, politics, environmental research and sheer luck, the animals had been protected.

government land with "forever protect" the Wedderburn site.

The Liberal state government was left to react, and seven months later Premier John Fahey - prompted by Liz Kernohan, then State MP for Camden (which covered the site) - announced that the Wedderburn land had been officially resumed and would be declared a reserve.

After more than six years of protests and pickets and the longest-running green ban in Australian history, the battle had finally been won.

In 1999, Campbelltown Council unanimously supported a motion by Cr Verlie Fowler - one of the original koala campaigners - to offer the public

The koalas were very lucky with their timing

Green bans - initiated by the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) were largely responsible for saving Campbelltown's koalas by providing a last line of protection against developers throughout the danger period of 1990-91. The union has since been given a National Trust heritage award for this action. But as CFMEU secretary Andrew Ferguson stated last week, the koalas would have been in deep trouble if they had been discovered today. The Howard Government's workplace laws have made such union green bans illegal, punishable by massive fines and even imprisonment.

An expanding empire: Koalas are now regularly spotted across the Campbelltown region, from Appin to Glenfield, largely thanks to the long battle to protect their original core habitat in Wedderburn. This sign in Peter Meadows Road, Kentlyn, was one of many that have been erected in past years warning motorists of our furry neighbours.

Photo: **Jeff McGill**



Developer defied ban

This week we continue our look at the battle in the late 1980s and early 1990s to save the Wedderburn koala colony.

Jeff McGill reports.

A COLONY of koalas discovered at Wedderburn in 1986 had, within two short years, become an environmental battleground.

As we explained last issue, an Indonesian-based developer, Yap Yan Pin, was determined to build a prestige housing estate right next to the koala colony on the edge of the O'Hares Creek gorge.

Local environmental and community groups were just as determined to stop it.

A sympathetic Campbelltown Council also used every legal avenue to block and delay the developers.

Unfortunately, a CSIRO report commissioned by the council to determine the precise extent of the koala habitat only inflamed the situation, because both sides claimed it justified their own viewpoints.

By the end of 1988, many Liberal and independent councillors were openly siding with the developers. But a new Labor Mayor Jim Kremmer, with a very slim majority, stood firm.

During 1989, the council repeatedly rejected a range of options prepared by Yap Yan Pin, usually by a narrow 8-7 vote among the 15 councillors.

Finally, at the end of the year, Yap Yan Pin took legal action against the council via the NSW Land and Environment Court.

And it won. In May 1990, the court ruled in favour of the developer, which was given approval for the construction of its prestige estate – barring four blocks closest to the main koala habitat.

Mayor Kremmer, environmentalists, schools and scientists expressed disbelief, and some feared the battle was now lost.

The Liberal State Government again refused to step in.

It was at this stage, however, that a new champion arrived: the unions.

In a last ditch bid to stop the developers, a "green ban" was placed on the Wedderburn site.

This controversial union action effectively stopped anything – from bricklaying to electrical connections – from going ahead immediately.

The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Electrical Union (CFMEU) would

later win a National Trust heritage award for this vital action.

Heartened by the union solidarity, politicians, residents and even families and school students vowed to stand in front of the bulldozers.

Airds mum Sue Dobson became a leading figure, at the forefront of negotiations with the union leaders.

The awkward stalemate continued for months, until January 1991, when Yap Yan Pin suddenly moved in – with non-union contractors – to build a sealed road into the bushland site.

NEXT WEEK PROTESTERS PUSHED ASIDE



Early protests: Deputy mayor John Hennessey and Mayor Peter Primrose at a Mawson Park rally in 1988.

5/9/07 McGill

Bureaucracy silenced the radio stars

Today on our local airwaves we have commercial radio station C91.3 (started 2001) and 2MCR community radio (formed 1989). But many residents recall the brief heyday of 2CT, which began broadcasting from a hilltop near St Andrews in May 1978. It had a wide format, but got bogged down in petty disputes and financial difficulties largely caused by Federal Government advertising restrictions. The station closed in January 1981.

Bitter battle, by gum

29/8/07 McAd

The battle to save our local koala colony dominated headlines in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In a four-part series, **Jeff McGill** looks back at the saga he once reported on.

THE discovery of a koala colony at Wedderburn in 1986 did not originally make headlines.

Quite the contrary, in fact.

The Macarthur branch of the National Parks Association (NPA) decided to keep a lid on its exciting find to avoid "unwelcome intruders" as they began monitoring the site.

But there was one big problem.

Campbelltown Council had four years earlier approved a prestige rural-residential housing estate for the bushland site, on the edge of O'Hares Creek Gorge, after a 1982 study found no "sensitive fauna".

In 1988, the developer – the Indonesian-based Yap Yan Pin – finally decided to proceed with its six-year-old plan for an estate.

In response, the NPA went public.

News that Campbelltown had its very own koala colony captured the public imagination in an instant, but the developers – armed with a council approval – were determined to bring in the bulldozers and builders.

As a sweetener, Yap Yan Pin made a "gift" of 90 hectares of the site to the council as public reserve.

But the estate with its cars, pets and other human impacts would be a disaster to the adjoining colony, environmentalists argued.

And here the battle began.

The NPA immediately launched a media blitz to protest about the plight of the koalas, with the development portrayed as a death sentence for the marsupials.

Public support was not in short supply and it became clear the colony was more extensive than first thought, with the 68th koala sighting in June 1988.

Campbelltown Council, led by Labor Mayor Peter Primrose, begged the newly elected Premier, Nick Greiner, to intervene and stop the bulldozers.

But the Liberal State Government refused to get involved, short of arranging "voluntary covenants" with the developer to control things such as tree felling and dog supervision.

NPA branch secretary Julie Sheppard said the Government was "selling out" the koalas and called the covenants worthless and not policeable.

■ In the late 19th century, the Campbelltown district was understood to have had plenty of koalas. But records indicate that residents shot most of them for their pelts in the early 20th century.

■ Before their rediscovery in 1986, koalas had not been seen for about 50 years. Many old-timers in the late 1980s told the *Advertiser* that they had never seen one of the marsupials in their entire lifetime spent in Campbelltown.



Fierce fight: These marsupials had no idea of the controversy they were creating.

The unfolding drama was covered in detail by the local media and soon a major community-based campaign to save the koalas was in full swing.

It involved a loose coalition of groups such as the council, NPA and a newly

created Campbelltown Koala Association (CKA) led by a suburban mum from Airds, Sue Dobson.

When a special protest rally was held at Mawson Park it was dominated by family groups and schoolkids.

Meanwhile, the environmentalists – including highly regarded former ranger, Keith Longhurst – kept a close eye on the Wedderburn site.

Public petitions were collected, debates raged in State Parliament and the CSIRO began a study of the site.

A court battle was also looming.

NEXT WEEK THE DEVELOPERS MOVE IN

Call to save bush

By Alicia Bowie

McA
21/3/07

A TOP koala expert does not want sensitive bushland in St Helens Park turned into suburbia.

University of Western Sydney associate professor Rob Close, of the Koala Research Team, gave evidence in the Land and Environment Court in 2001 against developing the land on Kellerman Drive.

Dr Close, of Campbelltown, has again voiced his concern for the site after it was sold by Landcom to development company, the Mir Group, last year.

Dr Close said the land had good koala habitat trees such as grey gum, stringy-bark, Cumberland woodplain and forest red gums.

He said that while the Koala Research Team had not captured breeding females at the site, it was used by dispersing koalas.

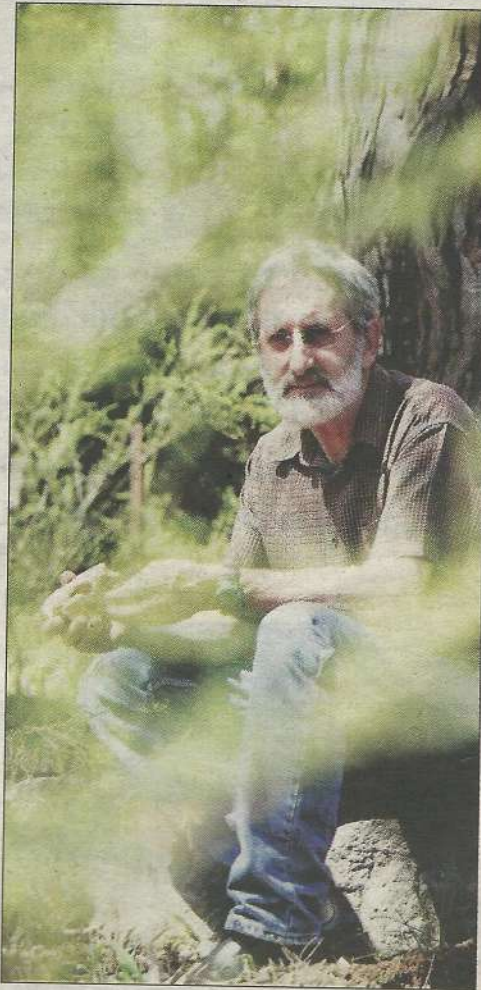
"That area drains into peak koala habitats so any run-off that comes from that area will go into those creek lines," he said.

"The increased number of houses means increased number of dogs, increased chances of arson, also garden escapees, so more weeds. For all those reasons I'd prefer not to see development on that site at all. It's a marvellous buffer zone for the Georges River."

Councillor Sue Dobson wants the State Government to acquire the land to save it from development.

A Department of Environment and Conservation spokesman said: "There's a planning process in place to handle that land and assess it to make sure the right development takes place or the not-right development doesn't take place."

Under section 145 of the National Parks And Wildlife Act the Government can acquire land for the purpose of conserving threatened species, populations or ecological communities.



Keep houses away: Dr Robert Close, with the skull of one of Campbelltown's koalas, wants the St Helens Park bushland site to be kept as a buffer zone to the Georges River.

Picture: Luke Fuda

OPINION

Residents wild about claims of no wildlife

St Helens Park residents have disagreed with the Mir Group's statement that there is no wildlife in the area where a new housing development is planned.

I WOULD disagree with Sam Mir in regards to wildlife on the 30ha site at St Helens Park (*Macarthur Chronicle*, Campbelltown edition, March 3). I took a photo of a wallaby on February 22, after the (residents') meeting at the community centre.

As you can see the St Helens Park Public School is in the background and there were many witnesses including councillors. The area the wallaby feeds is planned for townhouses.

Michelle Ford
St Helens Park
DID the consultants actually have their eyes open when they "did not find evidence" of wildlife. The "crust of it" is that there is more than evidence of wildlife in there. Open your eyes Mr Mir... the world is not always about profit.

Michael Vance
St Helens Park

WRITE TO US

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The wallaby makes an appearance at the residents' meeting at St Helens Park and (inset) our report on this development issue.

Picture: Warren Donovan

seemed to be a sign that the wildlife wanted to lodge a protest. Thank you for your article and hope we have your support and that of your readers.

Jane-Maree Wilson
St Helens Park

I HAVE lived in Fullerton Circuit which is next to the bushland they propose to develop for the last six years and in that time I have seen koalas, wallabies, frogs, snakes, lizards etc. I can't understand how the government could sell such an important area of bushland/habitat such as this. Of course he (the developer) is going to say there is no wildlife in there.

I also have photos of wildlife from this area and it would not be difficult to get more.

Warren Donovan
St Helens Park

The statement by the Mir Group that there is no wildlife on the site at St Helens Park is utter rubbish. I have lived in the area for over six years and have seen on separate occasions wallabies and echidnas. Making the claim that residents are lying to keep the area for recreation is false.

Charlene Reynolds
St Helens Park

and blue tongue lizards are seen scurrying into the scrub.

On Sunday, February 22, after the residents' meeting, a swamp wallaby was grazing in the now fenced-in area between the community hall and St Helens Park Public School. Could it be that this solitary mammal, came to voice his/her view of the destruction of his/her habitat?

Deborah Evans-Clark
St Helens Park

I AM a long time resident of St Helens Park and have walked through the bush in question

CONDITIONS

Letters should be kept brief. Name, address and phone number must be supplied. Letters are submitted on condition that Cumberland Newspapers, as publisher

of the Macarthur Chronicle, may edit and has the right to reproduce in electronic form and communicate these letters.



UWS Vol 2 spring issue 2006

Robert Close with Lynn, a local old girl in one of the bush corridors around Campbelltown.

Help koala man find holy grail

Australian wildlife – some rare and endangered – may be found in Campbelltown bushland

TO THE UNINITIATED, the Eastern quoll is a small carnivorous marsupial no bigger than a house cat.

But to Robert Close, Associate Professor at UWS School of Biological Sciences, this species, last sighted in the 1960s at Vaucluse, is the holy grail.

Associate Professor Close hopes the Eastern quoll, believed by many to be extinct, may have survived in bushland near UWS.

He also holds hope that the

bushland, much of which has been sealed off from human activity like a time capsule, may harbour the brush-tailed rock wallaby – a beautiful, agile animal that prefers rocky places generally beside rivers.

In fact, any small wallabies are of great interest to the Associate Professor and all would be important.

Associate Professor Close is appealing to the UWS community for help in spotting and protecting these and 23 other species already identified in the Camden, Campbelltown and Wolondilly areas.

'There are huge expanses of bush on the fringes of Sydney – places like the Holsworthy firing range, the Avon Dam catchment

Continued on page 3

Help koala man find holy grail *from page 1*

area and Morton National Park,' said Associate Professor Close.

'We've identified many important native species in these areas. Now we are focusing on these rare and endangered animals.'

Associate Professor Close said that fairly common native species already identified in the UWS region include swamp wallabies, red-necked wallabies, grey kangaroos, wallaroos, wombats, koalas, ring-tailed and brush-tailed possums, sugar gliders, brown antechinuses, bush rats and echidnas.

Less common species sighted include platypuses, long-nosed bandicoots, spotted-tail quolls, squirrel gliders, greater gliders, feather-tailed gliders, pygmy possums, common dunnarts (small carnivorous marsupials), swamp rats, water rats and New Holland mice.

And then there are the extremely rare species that Robert Close hungers for information about: the brush-tailed rock wallaby, the potoroo and the red-necked pademelon. And, of course, the Eastern quoll.

Associate Professor Close assisted in saving a koala population near the UWS Macarthur campus.

In 1986, local historians spotted koalas just as developers were set to swoop on 40 hectares in the area.

A battle raged for almost 15 years before the site was saved to



Quoll-spotters' guide

1. Use a Google image search to get accurate pictures of native species
2. The species of most interest are the Eastern quoll, the short-nosed bandicoot and any wallaby smaller than knee height
3. If you think you've spotted one, contact Associate Professor Close on his pager: 02 9962 9996.

protect the koalas and the adjoining, vital O'Hares Creek.

Now Associate Professor Close closely monitors the group that he said is around 300-strong.

'Due to low density and low stress, their fertility rate appears to be very high. These koalas also seem to be unusually long-lived. Several are already 14 or 15 years old – which we had thought was the limit in the wild – and still going strong,' said Associate Professor Close.

'Of the 150 females, probably 100 are breeding and producing around 70 surviving cubs per year.'

Koalas return to their natural habitat

1/9/06
UNI News
The University of Sydney
Vol 38 # 11 p4

A program to reintroduce koalas into their natural foraging grounds in New South Wales is being monitored by researchers in the Faculty of Veterinary Science.

Koala numbers in the bushlands of NSW are declining at an alarming rate. Less than a century ago the marsupials flourished in large numbers in the eucalyptus trees in the south of the state. But suburban developments, bushfires and disease have taken their toll and only a few fragmented colonies remain.

Now the University's Faculty of Veterinary Science is pioneering a pilot study of the translocation of koalas into the Bilyrambija region – an area extending from the Wollondilly River at Big Hill to Towrang, north of Goulburn in the Southern Tablelands – as part of its Masters in Applied Science in Wildlife Health and Population Management program. This is one of the few courses in the world devoted entirely to wildlife conservation through a combination of wildlife health and management.

In collaboration with the University of Western Sydney and Landcare, the project will start by introducing one male and one female koala from Campbelltown's successful koala nurturing scheme – a monitoring and rescue service that was launched by the University of Western Sydney and community groups almost 15 years ago. The koalas will be moved to the Tarlo River National Park to



attacks, but the colony was also threatened by dog attacks, road accidents and nearby land developments.

Associate Professor Tony English from the Faculty of Veterinary Science said koala translocations had not always had good outcomes. "We are determined to undertake a best practice program to demonstrate that it can be done successfully," he said.

The two koalas will be radio-collared and tracked by Melissa and a team of students to ensure that their health, appearance, weight and faecal pellets remain normal. Once the researchers are certain of the habitability of the area plans will be made to introduce more koalas, although Professor English said there was no question of taking animals away from healthy populations.

It is hoped that the koalas will disperse into the surrounding eucalyptus-rich forests of the Bilyrambija region, but the team is aware that there could be complications.

"If it becomes clear that the Tarlo is not a suitable habitat, the koalas will be recaptured and returned to the Campbelltown colony," Professor English said.

David Phelan, the newly appointed director of the Wildlife Health and Conservation Centre at Camden which opens in early 2007, said the project would go towards "making a significant contribution to the field of veterinary conservation biology".

see if it can sustain future koala colonies.

Although the Campbelltown colony is breeding well, conservationists in the area, want to create a back-up plan – an "insurance population" explains Melissa Farelly, a Masters in Wildlife Health and Population Management student who is leading the initial translocation and follow-up research.

She said the greatest risk to the koalas in Campbelltown was posed by frequent arson

Festival has green message

mond 26/4/06

By Alicia Bowle

CAMPBELLTOWN'S position between the Georges and Nepean rivers means we are lucky people.

That's the sentiment of Robert Close, of the Mac Koala Club, who hopes that residents will attend Riverfest 2006 to find out just how lucky.

"Overall our closeness to the Georges River bushland and the river itself is a huge plus for Campbelltown," Dr Close said.

Riverfest combines the area's cultural delights with environmental marvels. It will be held on Sunday, June 4, at Koshigaya park, from 10am to 4pm. Residents will have a chance to learn about water quality, stormwater pollution, waste minimisation, native plant species, mudbrick construction, composting and alternative energy resources.

There will be interactive workshops on recycled art, making craft items from all over the world, African dance and Tongan drumming.

Dr Close said he will definitely be there on the day, along with the Mac Koala team.

"It's a chance for people to ask us questions," he said. "We put on a few little games for the kids and we have a collection of skulls which sounds a bit gruesome but there's a lot to learn from skulls."

A dry river bed race will be held on the day to mark the Fisher's Ghost water course that runs beneath Koshigaya Park. It will be hotly contested by local companies and community organisations.



Riverfest: Hannan Chahal, of Macarthur Diversity Services, introduces a skull that Robert Close carries with a sign saying: "Shirley the Koala" in Arabic. They are hoping everyone participates in the delights of Riverfest. "I think its important to realise that anything that goes into the gutter in Campbelltown finishes up in the Georges River - all the cigarette butts, dog poo and oil drips from cars," Dr Close said.

Picture: Joanthan Ng

HOW TO HELP

Riverfest is looking for keen community groups to host stalls and activities on the day and teach locals a special skill that will help enhance their environmental or cultural knowledge. For information on stalls or on performing, call 4645 4515 or see Campbelltown Council's website www.campbelltown.nsw.gov.au



Mopping up: Kentlyn RFS Brigades clean up the fire to ensure it is completely out.

18/10/06

Fires scorch bushland

By Jessica Mahar

LAST week's warm weather left 45 hectares of Kentlyn bushland scorched – firefighters battled with hot conditions on Friday and Saturday.

Macarthur Rural Fire Service told the *Advertiser* they had established containment lines by 1pm on Friday, with no properties damaged.

“Across the weekend the crews were monitoring and patrolling it; the warm weather would every now and then flare up logs,” said community safety officer inspector Jason Heffernan. “As the cool change came through in late afternoon and night, it really helped the firefighters.

“Both fires [Cecil Hills and Kentlyn] over the weekend had [the] potential to inflict damage on surrounding properties; however, quick action by the fire brigades prevented that from happening.”

The fire began last Thursday afternoon off the Darling Avenue fire trail, burning bushland adjoining the Holsworthy military range and private land.

Residents in Georges River Road and Old Kent Road were provided with bushfire preparation advice.

Inspector Heffernan said arson had not been ruled out as the fire's cause.

“The Rural Fire Service fire investigation unit is currently at the scene and is working with Campbelltown

detectives and forensic police to determine the cause,” he said.

Police warned firebugs that if they started bushfires they would be hunted down, charged and jailed.

NSW Assistant Police Commissioner Denis Clifford warned those who deliberately lit fires that they faced a maximum penalty for arson of 14 years' imprisonment.

“We will investigate all bushfires and, where the legislation allows, those charged with lighting them will find themselves before the courts,” he said.

A 22-year-old Glenfield man was charged with two counts of deliberately lighting a fire in bushland at Macquarie Fields last week.

22/3/06 mch

Cambelltown burnt to ashes by 1929 bushfire

THE worst bushfire ever to hit Campbelltown struck in 1929, starting from a railway locomotive spark in between Leumeah and Minto stations.

It quickly took off and wiped out everything in its path, scorching a trail of suffering through the rural area now occupied by Leumeah, Kentlyn, Ruse, Airs and St Helens Park, finally burning out near Appin Road.

This newspaper reported: “With wet bags about their bodies, Dan and Mrs Longhurst and family were forced to leave [their home]. Through a bush track they ran, their clothes almost alight, his ponies racing past singed to their skins.” Dozens of families were left with nothing after losing their homes, crops and animals – just in time for the onset of the Great Depression.



Our native animals rise from the ashes

By KATE MURRAY

THE bushfires of three years ago were thought to have decimated native animals.

But evidence has now emerged that, far from destroying endangered species, fire might help the local fauna.

Yearly surveys carried out by the Department of Environment and Conservation paint a picture of wildlife surviving and even thriving after the devastating 2001 bushfires.

The long-standing koala colony in the Avon Dam area has branched out in the past year, colonising areas they have not previously been in.

DEC project officer Kylie Madden said the koalas have moved more than 10km from their core habitat to areas burnt out in the fires.

"They seem to be moving into the burnt areas

for the new, fresh shoots," Ms Madden said. "The young ones born since the fires are moving out into new areas and the older adults are also becoming more adventurous."

The post-fire surveys are compared with a comprehensive survey taken just before the fires.

"We think these fires are really catastrophic but most of the animals have ways of surviving.

"A lot of the animals probably go down into the gullies which are often untouched by the fire — there are always little pockets left unburnt."

University of Western Sydney koala expert Robert Close said koalas tended to live near rivers and could survive by hiding in rocky areas as the fire swept through.

Large animals such as swamp wallabies, cockatoos and lyrebirds were also increasing.

21—THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, www.dailytelegraph.com.au

Other animals, miraculously, managed to survive the fire almost unscathed.

The minuscule southern emu wren lives in the swamplands of Madden's Plains, which were completely scorched in the fire.

"The swamps were burnt really badly and we thought they'd be wiped out," she said.

"They're poor flyers, they're just an embarrassment, but lo and behold these little birds came through and we have no idea how they did it."

But Ms Madden warned the surveys have shown just how fragile the animals' recovery is.

"The 2004 survey is a little better than the 2003 and that was a little better than 2002, they're just slowly increasing.

"They need time to keep building their numbers back to where they were before the fires."

telegraph.com.au Friday, December 24, 2004—21

Campbelltown Macarthur Advertiser, Wednesday, July 6, 2005

News

Koala plan bearing up

CAMPBELLTOWN Council is to work with the Australian Koala Foundation to protect the local koala population while it completes a formal koala plan of management.

After discussion and negotiation with the Australian Koala Foundation, the koala plan for Campbelltown is now almost complete.

A draft has been sent to several relevant government agencies for comment.

Until the plan is complete, the council will implement several measures to protect koalas.

■ New koala warning signs will be installed in potential problem areas where koalas are known to cross roads, in addition to maintaining the existing ones;

■ An information brochure is to be produced, and additional signs installed in koala habitat areas to encourage dog owners to restrain or confine their animals when they become aware of koalas on or near their property or while walking their dogs;

■ An information brochure about ways in which the public can be involved in koala conservation;

■ Habitat restoration works;

■ Promotion of the Koala Hotline.

Campbelltown Mayor Brenton Banfield said that a strategy to conserve koala habitat was essential to their survival.

"Koalas are becoming increasingly susceptible to habitat loss, attack by predators, drought, disease and bushfire," he said.

"They are extremely vulnerable and in need of protection.

"Council is committed to providing this through an effective management plan."

Pool's cool but gum's fun

By Amanda Carlin

THIS little koala went troppo on Tuesday when he traded gum trees for a small backyard palm in Engadine.

National Park rangers Leigh Nolan and Craig Shephard rescued the young male marsupial after the residents alerted the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The rangers, neither of whom had dealt with koalas before, coaxed him out of the tree with a basket, cage and plenty of sturdy blankets.

He was relocated to nearby crown land which backs onto Heathcote National Park where he scurried to the top of a 20-metre grey gum.

Service spokesman John Ross said the family was concerned - they had a dog, a pool and spa and high fences which could put the koala in danger.

"The likelihood is the koala must have scaled the fence or got through when the gate was open, found itself in an environment it wasn't very comfortable with, and shimmied up the nearest tree which just happened to be a palm tree," Mr Ross said.

"Young males are like young males of any species - they're beating a track from the nest and out looking for adventure."

Mr Ross said it was a timely reminder for residents to be aware that there was evidence of koalas dispersing and increasing in numbers. He said another koala was spotted on Woronora Dam Road last week and there were indications that many, possibly from the



On a limb: A young male koala was found hanging around in an Engadine backyard. **Picture:** National Parks and Wildlife Service

Wedderburn colony in south-west Sydney, were using the Royal and Heathcote national parks as corridors and could be seen in suburban areas. He said dogs and cars were among the biggest threats.

Contact the National Park Visitors Centre, 9542 0666 if concerned about a koala or other wildlife.

YOUR SAY

Local koalas find safe haven at last

311104 MCM
As a campaigner for over 20 years, well before it became both fashionable and emotive, I was absolutely delighted to learn during my overseas trip that the koalas are now safe at Wedderburn.

This colony of koalas is perhaps the most unique in Australia in that these koalas are free of disease.

We all love our homes – now these world-famous and tender Aussies have a home of their own at O'Hares Creek Gorge, Wedderburn.

Full marks to people like local member Graham West, members of the Macarthur National Parks Association, members of the public

and a very special thanks must go to the *Campbelltown-Macarthur Advertiser*.

Your support for this cause was, I believe, pivotal in this wonderful outcome.

The help and support that you have given Dr Close and his team at the Campbelltown campus of the University of Western Sydney and your setting up of the Mac Koala Club for the children of Macarthur has been priceless.

This has been a tremendous win-win story for the environment, the koalas and the citizens of Macarthur.

JOHN HENNESSEY
Campbelltown

Girl guides catch Lyn snoozing

The Macarthur Region Guides contacted us recently to ask whether we could talk about koalas to a group of guides who were camped at Ruse over the weekend.

The guides were participating in a worldwide ham radio jamboree.

The Campbelltown Amateur Radio Club set up a system so that the girls could communicate with their fellow guides across the world.

It turned out that the campsite was near koala Lyn's territory. She had once been tracked to the edge of the site.

We agreed to talk to the girls and promised to track Lyn before we arrived. If she turned out to be within walking distance of the campsite we would take the guides to visit her in the bush.

As it turned out, the day was clear and warm, Lyn was only 20 metres from a fire trail and her tree was only 500 metres

from the campsite. So the guides were soon trooping through the bush.

Lyn was in a smallish tree and looking rather bedraggled. Perhaps the drought had had a bad effect on her.

She is, after all, 10 years old and her teeth would be worn, making it difficult to break down hard, dry gum leaves and release the nutrients on which the koala depends.

The recent rain should encourage



new, softer leaf growth. It will be interesting to see if the condition of our radio-collared animals improves.

Unfortunately, Lyn was snoozing and was not very exciting to watch.

Hopefully the girls will be on the watch and will call us on the UWS pager number 9962 9996 if they sight any koalas during their activities in future.

Scouting for cubs in the bush

Whenever possible, we give distinctive ear tags to the young cubs after they leave their mothers' pouches but before they become independent.

The youngster then sets off into the wide world and we wait for people out in the community to spot it and call us.

Sometimes we have to wait for years - eight in the case of Elle - before we can relocate the animal. It's always exciting when the pager buzzes and the message says that a tagged koala has been sighted.

Who will it be? How far has it



moved since it was tagged? Does it now have young of its own?

We've found that the males tend to move considerable distances from their mothers' territories and we've been able to gather information on the routes they take and what defines a "koala corridor".

The daughters, however, don't

travel so far and we would like to know much more about the way that they set up their own territories.

So far we've been able to follow the lives of three daughters to the point where they have daughters themselves.

Two of the former have been radio-collared, but unfortunately both of their radio-collars ceased transmitting prematurely and we've been unable to recapture them.

The third, Janice, has been seen several times and her first cub has recently been spotted outside the

pouch. Janice is the daughter of Irene whose territory adjoins that of Shirley beside the Georges River.

Janice then moved three kilometres north to the Peter Meadows Creek where she's been spotted regularly by local bushwalker Kieran Griffin.

Kieran has earned naming rights so often that he allowed us to choose the name for Janice's cub.

So we named her Lorraine.

What will the cub's future be?

You may be able to help us find out by ringing the UWS koala pager 9962 9996 if you spot a koala.

This is a win for the environment and residents, Koalas are safe

Macarthur Chronicle 28th September 2004

MELANIE DARMODY

A BITTER 20-year battle to protect Wedderburn's endangered koala colony has ended with a 461ha parcel of delicate bushland being declared a national park.

O'Hare's Creek Gorge, home of Sydney's largest koala population, was last week named part of the Dharawal State Conservation Area, protecting the 200-strong koala colony from future development.

For the past two decades, Wedderburn residents and conservation groups have campaigned to protect the koala habitat, which was subdivided and surveyed for housing during the 1980s until building unions imposed a green ban on the site.

Celebrating the declaration last week, Macarthur National Parks Association president and Wedderburn local Barry Durman said it was a fitting end to a worthy community battle.

"We joined the fight for this area in 1986 when the roads were laid out and the power poles were put up for the subdivision. We knew it wasn't an appropriate area for more housing," he said.

"This is a win-win result for the environment and local residents but also for the wider community.

"It is also a historic win because the development went so far but was stopped by the green bans.



Chron 28/9/04

People win fight to save koalas

■ From page 1

"The amount of work that has gone into getting this protection has been amazing and now finally we have a national park in Campbelltown."

Campbelltown State Labor MP Graham West said he was proud to be part of the historic win for the area. Growing up in Wedderburn, Mr West said he remembered well the community protests to stop the subdivision. "I know just how close that whole area came to being developed," he said.

"It had been pegged out for housing and there are well defined and named cul-de-sacs still clearly visible there. The O'Hare's Creek Gorge is home to 14 threatened animal species and scores of nationally significant plant species."

Campbelltown Mayor Brenton Banfield, who told the *Chronicle* in April that housing development provided a chance to improve the natural environment, said the declaration did not affect housing land earmarked by council for development.

Sun-Herald 29th September 2004

inc. ad. 29/9/04

Protection for koala colonies

By ALEX MITCHELL
Sun-Herald

Sydney's largest koala colony at Wedderburn has been given official protection from the encroachment of further urban development.

A new pocket of national park has been gazetted that covers 461 hectares of the O'Hares Creek Gorge, a vital habitat and a migration route for the 200-strong koala colony.

Environment Minister Bob Debus said the newly protected area would be included in the Dharawal State Conservation Area, where moist forests and gorge country provided an ideal koala habitat.

"Koalas are probably our most famous native animals but the numbers, sadly, are in decline, particularly along coastal NSW," Mr Debus said.

"It is estimated that koala populations in the eastern part of the state, where development pressure is greatest, are in decline and in many areas only small numbers remain."

Mr Debus said that by placing the colony under the protection of the Department of Environment and Conservation, koalas could be better protected from attacks by

New national park gazetted

dogs and cats which, along with bushfires, were the most serious threats to koalas.

Campbelltown state MP Graham West welcomed the announcement, which followed a long campaign by community and conservation groups and trade unions to save the pristine habitat.

"The colony is home to 14 threatened animal species and populations of nationally significant plant species," Mr West said.

"It also contains numerous Aboriginal sites, including well-preserved examples of the drawings, stencils and paintings of the Dharawal Aboriginal people."

The addition to the national park will provide a vital bush link for koalas that live as far away as Woronora and Heathcote in Sutherland Shire.

Conservationists hope it will provide a corridor for koalas returning to the Royal National Park.

SH 26/9/04

Koala path to halt decline of colony

By ALEX MITCHELL

SYDNEY'S largest koala colony, near Campbelltown, has been given official protection from the encroachment of further urban development.

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mambara



Spring is a time to shrug off the woolly coat, drag out the sun hat and enjoy the warmer weather and longer days. It is also an excellent time to spot some of Sydney's wildlife as they become more active. As always there are plenty of opportunities to get out into the natural environment or meet other like-minded people at an organised event.

Sydney's Hands-On Environmental Forum – Inspirations, Motivations & Celebrations

This forum is being hosted by the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority (CMA) Local Establishment Team (LET). It provides an opportunity for active members of the Sydney community and environmental professionals to come together in one place to acknowledge the enormous amount of work individuals and groups are undertaking for the environment.

Sydney's Hands-on Environmental Forum offers an event which celebrates these achievements by highlighting successful volunteer bushcare, urban biodiversity, stormwater, advocacy and community engagement projects and activities.

Through case studies, presentations by experts and interactive workshops *Inspirations, Motivations & Celebrations* will provide an important forum for information sharing, discussion and debate on the best ways to move forward as one collective voice for Sydney's natural environment.

Koalas in the Sydney Catchment – Where are they?

by Robert Close

Koalas are one of the most loved and iconic animals of Australia. Remarkably, in a city of more than 4 million people, these animals can still be found in pockets of bushland at the edge of our metropolis. An article in the Sydney Morning Herald of 13/5/94 proclaimed "Only 100 Sydney koalas left – and they may not last long". Yet a decade on, and several serious bushfires later, the koala population in Sydney is defying the odds.

In the Wedderburn/Campbelltown area, University of Western Sydney's koala research team has ear-tagged more than 100 koalas and is still frequently finding untagged animals. This population is generally healthy and now estimated at over 200 animals.

Koalas are regularly appearing in Sutherland Shire and there have been some fascinating sightings in Cumberland State Forest, the nearby reserves at Castle Hill, Upper Dural and at Avalon. New populations have also been recently discovered in the Warragamba catchment, there are regular sightings at Kurrajong, and two males have turned up in the Blue Mountains. However, little is still known of the population in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park.

So in spite of the grim prediction, Sydney's koalas have continued to survive. However, clearing of koala habitat on the urban fringe remains the greatest threat to these populations.

To assist in the research program, please report any sightings by calling the University of Western Sydney's koala pager: 9962 9996.



Photos: Mick Fairs

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Bait cuts down wait

Meaghan and Jason Baxter from Appin had an interesting tale to tell at school recently.

Their rose garden had been ploughed up by something that dug tunnels in the soil and made adjacent runways through the vegetation.

Margaret Cameron, a neighbour, had called us to see if we could offer any suggestions.

Three years ago, Margaret had found a koala in a tree in her front yard.

On that occasion we captured the koala, Neal, ear-tagged him and released him in nearby bushland.

We've not encountered him since but hope that he'll turn up some day.

We were intrigued to hear of the Baxters' problem so we took some wire box-traps out to investigate.

We didn't have long to wait. After baiting the traps with peanut butter and bread, we found on the very next morning, a small, chocolate-brown, female rat with



**Mac's
KOALA
CLUB**

Macarthur Advertiser 11th August 2004

a short, brown tail, dark eyes, and dark feet.

This beautiful animal has the common name of swamp rat, but we prefer its other names: tawny rat, or velvet-furred rat or its scientific name, *rattus lutreolus*.

Many people are unaware that Australia has about 60 species of native rats and mice.

Unfortunately, the introduced mouse, black rat and Norway rat give our native species a bad name.

Most of our native mice, like *rattus lutreolus*, are not a health problem for humans.

It was quite unusual to find a swamp rat several hundred metres from the bush.

Normally they live in dense grassland and carve their tunnels through the vegetation by cutting the grass stems.

Each female has its own, non-

overlapping territory of at least 0.2 hectares and makes a nest in a burrow which can be a metre deep.

So it is likely that all that digging was being done by one tiny rat.

We released her in nearby bushland into a rabbit burrow surrounded by thick grassland.

We have found only one other local colony, and that is beside Victoria Road, Wedderburn.

We are keen to learn of any others and to plot their distribution in the district.

So if anyone sees the distinct, intricate runways in thick grassland give us a call on the UWS koala pager 9962 9996.

But don't call us if you see a rat with a tail longer than its body – that will be the introduced black rat.

Go lightly on bush

18/8/04



**Mac's
KOALA
CLUB**

Each year when we change the transmitter batteries of our radio-collared female koalas, we also like to catch their almost independent cubs.

We can thereby give the cubs their ear tags at the same time and so avoid stressing the koalas twice each year.

So this week it was 10-year-old Lyn's turn and fortunately she was in a tree from which we could flag her down without our having to climb the tree.

Such an easy catch was a good thing for Lyn and the tree-climber.

Sadly, Lyn's cub was nowhere to be seen.

Lyn still should have been suckling her cub, but neither of her teats was enlarged, indicating that the cub had not suckled for some time.

Lyn herself weighed only 8 kilograms, almost 1 kilogram lower than her heaviest weight.

Perhaps Lyn is suffering from the drought and was unable to extract enough nutrients from the

leaves to support both herself and the cub.

To survive, wild animals need bushland to be in the best possible condition. However, unwitting people in the bushland at Ruse-Kentlyn have damaged Lyn's bushland – two large areas had been cleared to make a sort of camping area. Trees had been hacked down, underbrush cleared and there were chairs and a lounge, fireplaces and a garden shed all 50 metres from a fire trail and 300 metres from Old Kent Road. We have nothing against cubby houses in the bush providing they're made from dead, natural vegetation found at the site. We ask all who use the bush to consider their impacts and strive to reduce them.

UWS koala pager: 9962 9996.



DAMAGED . . . Koala trackers believe campers unwittingly destroyed this part of koala habitat in Kentlyn.

Macarthur Advertiser 18th August 2004



BEAR ESSENTIALS . . . Dr Robert Close with Franceska, an elderly female koala that he has been radio-tracking since 1995 at Wedderburn.

Koalas are still living in danger

By **AMANDA GARARD**

The more than 200 koalas living in the Macarthur area are under threat from developments, a University of Western Sydney mammologist has said.

Associate Professor Robert Close said there needed to be stricter controls on development to decrease the rate of habitat loss.

"Restoring degraded urban bushland and maintaining a suitable fire regime that balances the needs of the bush with the risk to people and property is a difficult task," he said.

"That's why current and future land development presents a real danger for any wildlife that may exist in these areas."

Associate Professor Close said that major problems with development were not just the land clearing but additional impacts such as erosion, weeds, altered fire regimes and deaths from vehicles and dogs.

"We need intelligent development of already-cleared areas - intelligent development is replanting local natives, controlling dogs, rubbish

and trail-bike riders and restoring the natural under-storey," he said.

Associate Professor Close has done an extensive 14-year survey to determine Campbelltown's koala population.

He began researching the area's koala population after residents protested against a housing development at Wedderburn.

About 13,000 people petitioned against the proposed development, near O'Hares Creek gorge, to save the Wedderburn koala colony.

In 1999 the site was donated to the National Parks and Wildlife Service as part of a proposed koala sanctuary.

If it had gone ahead the koala population in the Macarthur may have been eradicated, Associate Professor Close said.

He said that the koalas in Campbelltown thrive in areas with shale-sandstone soil, which occurs in a narrow strip between Campbelltown and the Georges River, and believes that within the next 10 years there will be koalas living in Mount Annan Botanic Garden.

Banfield's Backyard

*me had
5/5/04*

Only one day into his new term and the Mayor, Brenton Banfield, was on national television (*ABC News 29/3*) telling the whole country how subdivision of the Campbell-town green-belt areas is actually a good thing for the local koalas.

According to the wisdom of Cr Banfield, when these areas are subdivided and sold off the new owners will plant more trees making a much more hospitable environment for our endangered wildlife.

Perhaps Cr Banfield could put his extraordinary knowledge of the natural world

to good use and run a weekly column in this newspaper called Brenton's Backyard.

He could cover subjects like: 'Gardenias and azaleas - the secret diet of the koala'; '101 uses for the koala your dog has just mauled'; and 'MacMansions and the 500 square metre block - which room to put the gum tree in?'

I guess we now know where Cr Banfield stands on the issue of the subdivision of the Edge Scenic Protection Lands.

It's a pity he didn't make clear his position on this issue before the election.

S HEASLIP
Ingleburn

Campbelltown

Koalas

*me
12/5/04*

Those who think they know all about koalas and the subdivision of the Edge Scenic Protection Lands are no doubt genuine in their concern but a little misinformed.

I have lived in the Scenic Protection Area for the past seven years and I have seen nothing even remotely resembling a koala or any other significant wildlife for that matter.

Tragically what I do see on a regular basis is abandoned domestic animals left to starve in the bush, dumped rubbish by the trailer load, abandoned and firebombed cars, environmental vandals tearing up the bushland on trail bikes and starting fires.

And yes sadly I am one of those people who has had to put up high fences and big gates and who keeps dogs,

not because I want to discourage our natural wildlife, but to protect my family and property from the unsocial activities which the Scenic Protection Area attracts, simply because there are never enough eyes watching to deter this type of activity.

So yes, Mayor Banfield is right. Subdivision of the fringe of the Scenic Protection Area will benefit our wildlife, because it will ensure that those who now abuse the area at will, will be under the public spotlight in the future. Its has been managed badly in the past. Here is an opportunity to manage the area properly.

YVONNE CAMPBELL
Minto

Signs of danger for koalas and their habitat

Two weeks ago we reported that a koala was hit beside a new "koala crossing" sign on the road at Wedderburn Gorge, resulting in the death of a cub.

Unfortunately, the sign was only visible to the downhill traffic and the koala was hit by a car going up the hill.

The motorist should have been warned by a similar sign that Campbelltown Council had erected on the southern side of the gorge.

Unfortunately, only the words "koala crossing" and our pager number remain at the site because the picture of the koala itself was souvenired soon after being put up.



Mac's
KOALA
CLUB

21/4/04

We would appreciate the return of this sign, preferably affixed to its original pole or at least left at the base.

If friends of the "collector" could put pressure on him or her to return the sign, we would be most grateful.

ABC TV viewers were treated recently to a few seconds film of our old koala Shirley and her grown-up daughter June.

The film accompanied a story about some of Steven's findings that were recently published in a book entitled *Urban wildlife: more than meets the eye*.

In our research paper, *Southern Sydney's urban koalas: community research and education at Campbelltown*, we analysed the number of sightings of koalas on different soil and vegetation types around Campbelltown and concluded that the

vegetation type most preferred by koalas was shale-sandstone transition forest. Such vegetation is limited locally to the area between Campbelltown's suburbs and the Georges River and is largely privately owned.

This type of forest, which has recently been recognized as an endangered ecological community, is clearly at risk of further degradation because of its proximity to housing.

For a reprint of our paper, contact Robert Close at UWS Campbelltown. Report any koala sightings on the UWS koala pager, 9962 9996.

Housing threat to koala survival

IT'S hard to believe that bustling urban Campbelltown is home to Sydney's largest population of koalas.

Sydney's best koala habitat is not along the leafy northern outskirts or the forests to the south but right here on our doorstep.

The Campbelltown koalas are alive and well - not an urban myth - and surviving in a bushland corridor stretching from the back of the Georges River to Wedderburn.

There have been many koala sightings over the years in Campbelltown, particularly in the suburbs bordering the Georges River bush.

This type of native forest, growing on a shale-sandstone transition soil, is preferred by koalas. Koalas are fussy eaters and will only consume a certain type of eucalyptus leaf. Just a 15-minute drive from the centre of Campbelltown's CBD will bring you to the edge of the forest - and all its magnificent treasures.

It's easy to forget that this bushland is part of our community and it's just as easy to forget that it is facing an enormous battle to survive encroaching urbanisation.

Two scientists from the University of Western Sydney have warned the koalas are facing their biggest threat to survival from housing development.

In a letter to the *Chronicle* this week, Associate Professor Robert Close, who has studied the local koala population for many years, reports the vegetation type preferred by koalas is now limited to 1317ha.

Of that, forest degradation and clearing means that 58 per cent now has less than 10 per cent foliage



Mandy Perrin

cover. The outlook for the koalas is grim, not to mention all the other native birds and animals living in this specialised ecosystem.

Campbelltown, like the rest of Macarthur, is under enormous pressure to provide housing as Sydney's population bursts at the seams.

But hands off the Georges River bushland. Put the houses somewhere else.

Frankly, it is surprising that this precious resource is not already protected from urban development - it should be safeguarded as a matter of urgency.

Campbelltown - and the rest of the Macarthur area - faces major challenges in the years ahead in achieving a balance between development and the environment. One of the attractions of the area has been its mix of country and city life and urban and natural environments.

It is up to our new civic leaders to ensure the Georges River bushland is protected from housing.

We do not want to live in a concrete jungle.

■ Mandy Perrin is the editor of the *Macarthur Chronicle*.



BIRDS-EYE VIEW: Michael Paul is concerned housing development in bushland areas is a threat to wildlife.

Photo: JOE MURPHY

The Chronicle 20/4/04

Critical loss of wildlife habitat

A RESPECTED ornithologist says Campbelltown Mayor Brenton Banfield should

refrain from espousing "meritless theories" on ways to protect threatened native wildlife.

Kearns ornithologist (bird specialist) Michael Paul urged people to ignore comments made recently by Cr Banfield,

suggesting that residents who planted trees on suburban blocks were helping minimise the impact new housing had on native bush habitat. "I am concerned that people might listen to Cr Banfield's

views because of his position as mayor," Mr Paul said.

"Cr Banfield professes his own ecological theories which are new to science. They have no merit. Evidence everywhere suggests that development of housing in these sensitive (bushland) areas will only cause further harm."

Mr Paul said the planting of trees in suburban gardens might allow common birds to become more abundant but did nothing to promote greater diversity of species.

"Council has a legal obligation to enhance the biodiversity of local wildlife," he

said. "It's scary that our mayor holds the views he does."

Mr Paul, an avid bird watcher for more than 30 years, is alarmed by the decline of many species in Campbelltown.

Sightings of many breeds including the Jacky Winter, the Fuscous Honeyeater and the Buff-rumped Thornbill were common 20 years ago but rare today.

"That obvious decline over time has made me more passionate about what measures are put in place to preserve native birds and wildlife," he said.

More than a colony can bear

DAILY TELEGRAPH 10/4/04



Koala study . . . Dr Robert Close of the University of Western Sydney.

Picture: JOE MURPHY

By SIMONE RICHARDS

SYDNEY'S largest koala colony is under threat from a development plan for land on the Georges River.

Conservationists fear subdivision of Campbelltown's outskirts could reduce the shale/sandstone transition forest — a critical koala habitat.

A recently released research paper by University of Western Sydney Associate Professor Robert Close and PhD student Steven Ward found the shale soil vegetation was preferred by koalas.

"The females are bigger and produce more and healthier offspring but, unfortunately, that area is largely privately owned," Dr Close said.

The pair has been studying the koala colony for a decade and they believe it is a major breeding site.

They say the colony has spread from its localised population at Wedderburn to an area stretching from Appin to Macquarie Fields.

"That area has a lot of shale soils which are more fertile than sandstone," Dr Close said.

Campbelltown Council is considering rezoning the Edge Scenic Protection Lands (east of Macquarie Fields, Ingleburn, Minto and Leumeah) for housing.

A capability study, requested by the landowners, has identified "potential for additional lots" including 43 lots (1ha minimum) along the Edge Scenic Protection Lands and 60 residential lots (500sqm minimum) in Leumeah and Macquarie Fields.

"However the capa-



bility study suggests that council take a proactive approach to ensure the protection and ongoing maintenance of the identified flora within its area," a council report said.

An independent study, funded by the landowners, will further gauge the potential for development.

The new council will consider the issue at the end of the month.

Dr Close said housing could be sustained in some parts of the land "if done delicately" with large lots and extensive planting.

"In general, the amount of housing you get is very hard to control," he said.

"If we were to lose [the bushland], it would certainly take a lot out of the colony."

He said urbanisation would increase the number of trail bikes, dogs, cars and septic run-off, all impacting on the 200-strong koala colony.

"I would like to see the council value this bushland resource and think very carefully about any development," he said.

Pat Durman from Georges River Environmental Action Team said residents had been fighting the subdivision proposals since 1992.

richardss@dailytelegraph.com.au

Koala party poopers

'Evidence' of colony threatens ADI site plans

D Tele. 96/4/04

By SIMON BENSON
Environment Editor

EVIDENCE that a koala colony could be living in the middle of one of western Sydney's largest proposed developments is being examined by State Government researchers.

The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) has confirmed that droppings which amateur naturalists claim they collected from the ADI site at St Marys — the site of a 5000-home proposed Lend Lease development — are from koalas.

The presence of koalas on the site, or evidence that they use it, could have major implications for the western Sydney development.

Under State Environmental Planning Policy 44, developers must ensure the protection of koala habitat discov-

History of how the venture has developed

- **1991:** Australian Defence Industries announces sale of 1535 ha St Marys site
- Deal struck to develop land in Lend Lease/Federal Government venture
- **2001:** Federal Government extends protected area from 630 ha to 850 ha
- **2003:** Plans unveiled for the development of 5000 homes
- **2003** (November): Two naturalists claim to find koala droppings on site
- **2004:** Federal Government sells the land to Lend Lease and pulls out of deal
- **2004** (March): Lend Lease announce plans to sterilise kangaroos on site
- **2004:** (April) Government scientists confirm droppings are from koalas

ered on-site. But the DEC claimed it couldn't verify the site of the samples.

It also refused to commit to confirming for itself whether koalas inhabit or use the bushland areas within the proposed development area.

"When we get the full facts at hand we will decide what course of action we will take," a DEC spokesman said.

The *Daily Telegraph* has learned that the evidence was obtained by the naturalists, also in the ADI Residents Action Group, when they entered the 1500 ha site illegally late last year.

Requests by Sydney's top koala researcher to be allowed on the site to verify the claims have been refused.

The site is now owned by Delfin

Lend Lease following its sale by the Federal Government earlier this year. Professor Robert Close from the University of Western Sydney confirmed that the samples were also sent to him and he has determined they are koala scats (droppings).

Dr Close said it was vital to determine whether koalas lived there.

He said WIREES records showed a koala was found outside the site's gate in 1990 and several reports of sightings have been made since.

"The fact there was this animal more than 10 years ago and several other reports since would mean there could be a colony in there," he said.

A Delfin Lend Lease spokesman said the Australian Koala Foundation had been on the site some years ago and found no evidence of koalas.

Have you seen a koala on the ADI site?
▶▶ dailytelegraph.com.au

Mayor not convinced

The Macarthur Chronicle

Suburban sprawl threat to bushland and wildlife

The Chronicle 6/4/04

ROMA DICKINS

CAMPBELLTOWN Mayor Brenton Banfield does not believe research findings which warn continued approval of residential housing in some suburbs adjoining the Georges River will decimate many native wildlife populations.

That view has put him at odds with respected local and wildlife expert Dr Robert Close, who helped co-write the recently published research paper *Urban Life-line: More than Meets the Eye* with fellow UWS scientist Steven Ward.

The pair say that bushland in Macquarie Fields, Minto, Leumeah, Kentlyn, Ruse, Airs, St Helens Park and Wedderburn bordering the Georges River is the best remaining koala habitat in Sydney and should be protected from further urbanisation.

"If this land is cleared many native animals and birds will be affected," Dr Close said. "This community has a magnificent bushland resource and we should think very carefully before destroying it. If it goes we lose something of immense value."

However, Cr Banfield said rural residential developments provided a chance to "improve the natural environment".

PRESERVING HABITAT

■ **WHERE:** bushland surrounding Campbelltown offers the best habitat for koalas in Sydney.

■ **THREAT:** encroaching urbanisation and the push for housing in bushland areas.

He said cleared farmland and orchards in some of the suburbs concerned provided offered "no opportunity for native fauna to exist".

Cr Banfield, a resident in rural residential Denham Court, said he had planted many trees on his one hectare block.

"When I moved in we rarely saw birds, now we even get visits from black cockatoos who make a lot of noise," he said.

Cr Banfield said suburban Bradbury was a green suburb full of native birdlife.

"It's possible to create an urban forest and Bradbury is a good example of that," he said.

Dr Close said he understood council was under much pressure to clear land for housing.

"We have to ask ourselves is housing more important than bushland?" he asked.



PROTECT WILDLIFE: Dr Robert Close is calling for the preservation of koala habitat in the Campbelltown area.

OPINION



PROTECT WILDLIFE: Dr Robert Close campaigns for the preservation of koala habitat.

The Chronicle 20/4/04

Not as simple as as one, two, tree

I REFER to an article in the *Macarthur Chronicle* of April 6 which refers to a research paper that Steven Ward and I wrote recently for the publication *Urban Wildlife: more than meets the eye*.

Our paper was titled "Southern Sydney's urban koalas: community research and education at Campbelltown".

If anyone would like a reprint please contact me at UWS Campbelltown.

A major finding of the paper was that the vegetation type most preferred by koalas in the Campbelltown area was now limited to only 1317ha, and of that limited area, forest

degradation and clearing means that 58 per cent now has less than 10 per cent foliage cover.

In the same article in the *Chronicle*, Mayor Brenton Banfield was quoted as saying that "it's possible to create an urban forest" by re-planting native vegetation on cleared suburban blocks.

To reclaim the preferred koala area he would have to plant with the original native shrubs and grasses as well as the original mixture of local trees. Conservation of scarce native bushland means a lot more than just planting trees.

Dr Robert Close
University of Western Sydney

Voters duped by new system

FURTHER to the letter on page 28 (*Chronicle*, April 6) headed Preference probe call, I suggest you ask the mayor to respond.

Clearly many voters did not realise that the voting method had changed. Even some people handing out how-to-votes did not seem to understand there was a new voting system. Previously, groups of candidates registered where their preferences were to

automatically go. Under the new system, voters had to choose whether they wanted to give preferences, and mark additional boxes on the voting paper accordingly. So, if at the recent elections, a voter numbered only one box above the line as "1" and that candidate did not get a quota, the vote was exhausted.

No preferences were allocated. Many voters were told "just vote 1 above the line". In actual fact, they had a right to indicate a number of preferences.

Verie Fowler, Ruse

Can't sit on the fence, Mr Mayor

IN response to Roma Dickins' article Mayor not convinced (*Chronicle*, April 6).

First, we are asked to accept high-rise apartments. These, we are told, will stop the urban sprawl. Next comes the suggestion that we can have new walking tracks cut through bushland along the Georges River and now, once again, the question of subdividing in the Georges River corridor has raised its ugly head. Let us also not forget that Menangle has also been suggested for a huge new subdivision.

We have a mayor who appears to believe he knows more about koalas than a professor who has studied the local population for many years. One would almost believe that some councillors really don't care what happens to our quality of life and the local bushland as long as Campbelltown is eventually covered with concrete and exotic trees.

As for the suggestion that people will move into these areas and plant trees, we suggest that our mayor should take a another look at what is already happening.

House blocks are so small that new residents have to decide whether to plant a tree or have a washing line. If the tree were to win, chances are the neighbours would complain about the leaves and the tree would be cut down.

Some new residents of bushland are doing the right thing but the majority move in and clear under-storey, which is home to birds such as finches and wrens, then plant exotics.

If native plants are chosen, they are quite often the more showy grevilleas which attract the more aggressive birds.

Next, up go the fences and fancy gates, cutting wildlife corridors, and then let us not forget the big dogs to protect the home. No, Mr Mayor, you cannot have your cake and eat it. Either we have healthy koalas, a river we can swim in and some of the best bushland in the Sydney basin, or we just live in a concrete jungle.

Barry Durman
President, National Parks
Association of NSW
Macarthur branch

Wallabies killed

Chron 9/3/04

ROMA DICKINS

RESIDENTS and native wildlife experts are on the lookout for a predator killing wallabies in bushland areas around Kentlyn.

Six wallaby carcasses have been discovered within a few hundred metres of each other during the past four weeks.

Harrison Rd resident John Casey and his wife Alison found several of the mutilated marsupials while out on regular walks. Mr Casey described the deaths as unusual and suspicious.

"I've lived here for 30 years and never encountered anything like this before," he said. "I think their hindquarters might have been grabbed and they were lying along the road which is strange. I'm not a forensic scientist but it certainly didn't look like they died of natural causes."

"On another occasion two greyhounds were seen being put in a van in Smith St. (Kentlyn) after presumably running free," Dr Close said.

"The evidence is circumstantial but only something capable of great speed and considerable strength could pull down these animals."

Dr Close said he had examined several of the dead wallabies and each had a crushed chest.

"An inexperienced animal would have grabbed the tail or a leg," he said.

Dr Close urged locals to report sightings of all dogs seen unleashed in Kentlyn bushland to council rangers on 4645 4000.

"The number of swamp wallabies killed in such a short time is a crisis," he said.

"Dogs should not be running loose in this area."



SAVED: a wallaby joey rescued from its dead mother at Ruse last month.

Local native wildlife expert and koala researcher Dr Robert Close said he believed greyhound dogs might be responsible for the deaths.

He said greyhounds had recently been sighted chasing swamp wallabies in Peter Meadows Creek (less than 2km from the dead Kentlyn wallabies).

Tiny Robbie fights for

place in sun ^{10/2/04}

AT just six months of age, Robbie has already got a five o'clock shadow.

The virtually hairless swamp wallaby has been cared for by Greg Petterson at his Thirlmere property for the past month.

Mr Petterson, a Sydney Wildlife Services volunteer, said Robbie was discovered in the pouch of his dead mother by two bushwalkers near Ruse.

He said the youngster had only just started to get a thin coverage of hair over his body. "It's just because of his age," he said. "Most wallabies are in their mother's pouch for around eight months before they get out and have a hop around."

Mr Petterson said Robbie had a good chance of surviving, because the bushwalkers who had quickly alerted Sydney Wildlife Services.

"He's on antibiotics at the moment and he seems to be doing quite well," Mr Petterson said. Sydney Wildlife volunteers may be contacted 24 hours a day on 9413 4300.



IN SAFE HANDS: wildlife carer Corinne Bushby holds Robbie who was given a second chance at life after being saved by bushwalkers. Photo: ROBERT POZO

Two more wallabies discovered dead

Following last week's column about the deaths of two swamp wallabies, we received yet another call to report two more deaths.



18/2/04

These were found 200m apart on a fire trail between Georges River Road and the river itself at Kentlyn and a kilometre from last week's killings.

We now know of five deaths at Kentlyn in a week.

The latest two were also females, one with a dead joey and the other with a live, newborn baby, about the size of a finger nail, still squirming in the pouch.

Both adults had single puncture marks in the chest, crushed ribs and matted fur around the neck, consistent with a dog attack.

It didn't surprise us then, when a caller rang to say that after seeing two greyhounds chasing a wallaby near Peter Meadows Creek. The caller had

pursued the dogs in the direction of houses on Hansens Road.

I have now notified Campbelltown Council and hope that the animals will be found.

On a happier note, we captured yet another male koala in Spring Creek.

We had received several calls about an untagged animal but it was always in trees and too difficult to attempt a catch.

Eventually, when the koala was in a large grey gum that was visible from the local houses, we decided to set our trap.

The problem with this method is that you have to wait for the koala to come down the tree and sometimes it is in no hurry.

On this occasion, we sat in deck chairs in Jeff Hunter's front garden listening to the koala feeding.

From time to time, it gave a half-hearted bellow that

sounded a bit like a cross between a trail bike and a chainsaw and lasted about 30 seconds. By 11 o'clock it was still feeding happily in the foliage and likely to stay there for quite a while, so we packed up our chairs and left.

Jeff rang at 3am to report a successful catch and the result was an 8.6kg young male, with an unhealthy brown coat.

Its human equivalent would be a skinny 15 year old with greasy hair.

No wonder its bellow was half-hearted; Nathan and Alex, koals who also live in Spring Creek, outweigh him by 2-3kg.

He's probably only passing through and so we'd like people who see him to call our UWS koala hotline, 9962 9996 and report his progress.

Shirley is battling on

Twelve-year-old Shirley has been in the wars again.

Two small bushfires have been lit in her territory since Christmas, but fortunately she has survived yet again.

She has also had to contend with a gang of trailbikers who had constructed an obstacle course in the areas which burned.

Her adult daughter, June, also caused us concern recently when we could not receive a signal from her radio-collar despite extensive searches in the area near Kentlyn Primary School where she had been living.

When a signal disappears there can be several possible causes: either the koala has



25/2/04

moved out of the area, the battery has gone flat, the aerial has been damaged, or the transmitter has been damaged.

An example of the last possibility would be if the koala was hit by a car.

Naturally such a fear is constantly in our minds until the koala is found.

So it's a nerve-racking time for us.

Consequently our radio-trackers, Lynn, Wendy and Mick, searched desperately to find a signal.

At last, after a week of searching, a faint signal was detected and to our great relief, June was located a kilometre from the school in an area which had been searched during the week.

Both June and her transmitter were in good condition so it is quite a mystery why she went off the air.

We'd love to know where she went or what happened.

Since then, June has been moving about quite a bit but heading in the general direction

of Peter Meadows Creek.

This creek, readers may remember, is the home of a small, rare, group of the endangered black chinned honey-eaters.

The area has also proved to be a very attractive area for koalas.

Not only does our radio-collared Amanda live there but we have also seen Leslie, who is Shirley's daughter from 1998, Taylor, originally from Minto Heights, and locals Kathleen and Kiera.

The area is popular with male koalas too: Tim and Greening have both been spotted there.

Then, last weekend, Kieran Griffiths sighted Janice in the area too.

Janice is the daughter of Shirley's neighbour, Irene, who lives 3.5km away on the cliffs above the Georges River.

Sadly, this special place is the same area where two free-roaming greyhounds were reported last week.

We would be grateful if people spotting either koalas or greyhounds would call us on the UWS koala hotline 9962 9996.

Centre, University of Western Sydney, July 21, 1994.

Wallabies killed

Chom 9/3/04

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"Dogs should not be running loose in this area."

Become a skilled koala spotter

A caller from Airds recently contacted us to ask where would be the best local places to take an overseas friend to spot koalas.

Our reply was that someone not used to spotting koalas could, on average, expect to spend about five afternoons in the bush before seeing one; not very good odds.

Some people, however, have the knack of finding koalas and we have three local spotters whose success rate is much better than one in five.

After 10 years of study we can now give some tips that will help the keen spotter.

We have discovered that almost every creek



Mac's
KOALA
CLUB

21/1/04

By **STEVE WARD** and **ROBERT CLOSE**

gully that leads into the Georges River, from Minto Heights to St Helens Park, will support a breeding female.

As the average home-range size is about 10-20 hectares, it is possible to assess the chances of spotting an animal.

A square 10 hectare area is about 330 metres long by 330 metres wide.

Imagine how many trees could be growing in an area of that size!

Given that it often takes us several minutes

to spot radio-tracked animals, even when we've located their trees, the time taken to search every tree in a 10 hectare area would be enormous.

Fortunately, koalas often seem to like trees overlooking the cliffs along the creek-lines or the Georges River itself.

So if spotters walk along fire-trails close to cliffs, their chances will be better.

Our technique is to first examine the bark of the koalas' favourite

trees, the grey gum.

This smooth-barked eucalypt loses its bark in plate-sized patches, leaving fresh orange bark underneath that ages to become first white then grey.

The bark is quite soft and is easily marked by the koalas' sharp claws.

In areas where claw marks are plentiful we then look for the koalas' distinctive dry, brown droppings beneath scratched trees.

Searchers should be careful, however, because the terrain is so steep and often slippery that it is easy to fall.

Call the UWS koala hotline on 9962 9996 if you spot one.

Macarthur Advertiser 21st January 2004

Four mysterious wallaby deaths point to canine culprits



Mac's
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11/2/04

People who walk regularly in bushland near the Georges River will occasionally see a dark wallaby crash away through the undergrowth ahead.

This animal is most likely to be a swamp wallaby, also known as a black wallaby or in Queensland rather unflatteringly as a stinker.

These wallabies stand about hip-high to a human and have black ears, tails, hands and feet, brown coats and yellow-khaki bellies.

Last year we were called out to the end of a road in Kentlyn to investigate a dead swamp wallaby.

same site on separate occasions could be written off as a coincidence, but finding three (plus the juvenile) suggests that a factor other than chance is in operation.

There is only one house nearby and although the owners keep dogs they are kept locked up at all times so could not be the cause of these deaths.

Perhaps there is something peculiar about the topography of the bushland here that allows a pack of dogs to run the wallabies into some kind of trap.

Maybe the layout of the fence beside the track is such that when fleeing wallabies burst out of the bush, they hit the fence and can

then be grabbed by the pursuing dogs.

We ask, therefore, that all dog owners who live near the bushland/suburban boundary ensure that their dogs cannot roam free.

A more sinister explanation is that human hunters might be using dogs to capture the wallabies and then dump the bodies at the end of the track.

If anyone sees people hunting with dogs in the bushland, we ask them to ring Campbelltown Council and the police immediately.

Anyone sighting koalas should ring the UWS koala hotline on 9962 9996.

wallaby lay dead the same place.

A few minutes later the phone rang again and the callers reported that they had found a dead juvenile only 25 metres further down the track.

This juvenile had appeared since they first discovered the adult on the previous day.

Finding two wallabies at the

A few months later we were called out again to find a female swamp wallaby lying dead in almost the same spot.

We thought, because of its wounds, that this animal had been killed by a dog.

To our great surprise, we were called again this week to be told that yet another adult swamp

Animal dumping is a very serious problem

On the day before Christmas, while our radio-trackers Wendy and Mick were in parking Wedderburn Gorge, they noticed strange movement beside the road.

Closer inspection revealed a fine black chook and two muscovy drakes scratching in the bushes.

Someone had apparently gone on holiday and rather than arrange for their pets to be looked after had just dumped them in the bush.

Fortunately the birds were used to being handled and we gathered them up and took them to Campbelltown Animal Care Facility.

Staff there put them in cages and assured us that someone was sure to give them a new



By STEVE WARD and ROBERT CLOSE

home. their pets poorly and

What would their fate have been had they are ignorant or care- less about the out-

'Most discarded pets will die of starvation, while a few will survive and cause a problem for our native species.'

we not picked them up?

The ducks probably would have worked their way down to the river but would have found it difficult to find enough food to survive.

The chook would most likely have been killed by feral dogs or cats.

Unfortunately too many people treat

Other thoughtless people use the gorge for dumping dead animals too.

We have found two large, dead dogs dumped beside the river and the site is often used to dump offal and unwanted parts of slaughtered sheep.

Household and industrial rubbish and garden wastes are also regularly dumped beside the gorge.

Of all these insults, probably the most damaging is the dumping of garden wastes.

Such dumping promotes the spread of weeds into the river and surrounds that will damage forever this beautiful and important area.

Remember the UWS koala hotline 9962 9996.

4/2/04

Longhurst fund to pay for collars

3112103

Last week's column centred on the death of Keith Longhurst, a local naturalist and historian who had always enthusiastically supported our koala research.

Keith was a no-nonsense character who would have preferred money to be spent on an environmental cause than on flowers for his funeral.

Keith's family, therefore, suggested to his friends that, if they preferred, they could donate to our University of Western Sydney koala research program.

Consequently, we were presented with \$440 from Keith's friends as a tribute to the man they respected and loved.

We have now set up The Keith Longhurst Koala Research Fund to be managed by the university.

Contributions to this fund are tax deductible and will be used to fund day-to-day costs of our research.

As an example of what can be done, the generous donations from the funeral will pay for the refurbishment of our replacement radio-collars for 2004.

Refurbishment means a change of battery, re-waterproofing the transmitter and replacement of aerials which are bitten by admiring male koalas.

Because we have seven females wearing radio-collars, we must have seven replacement collars ready for the yearly battery change and another ready in case we need to follow a new



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animal.

The koala hot-line is financed by the UWS School of Science, Food and Horticulture but our current major costs are for chemicals used in our DNA studies.

We are also seeking funding to support a post-graduate student's studies in this area and to fund the big task of data entry and data-base management.

Last week, we also mentioned that young male koalas tend to move out of the district.

Such a journey was illustrated last week when a young koala was found dying beside the spotted gum forest on Appin Road after it was hit by a vehicle.

The ear-tags identified it as Ricky, who we had originally captured five kilometres away in Woodlands Road, St Helens Park, in October 2002.

We will use our data base of sightings to persuade Campbelltown Council to erect koala warning signs on Appin Road.

This is an example of how community sightings can contribute to koala (and human) safety.

Remember our hot-line number:
9962 9996.

By Steven Ward
and Robert Close

Friend of bushland will be missed

Campbelltown lost one of its staunchest defenders and appreciators of our bushland and historical heritage when Keith Longhurst died last week.

He will be sadly missed by all who shared with him a love for the Georges River and its surrounding bushland and all who relied on him as a repository of historical information about the district and its fauna.

Keith also had a special relationship with koala research in the district, having been in the group of National Parks Association members who conducted surveys of the Wedderburn bushland back in 1986.

NPA koala records show that Keith took part in the sighting of at least 16 koalas between 1986 and 1988.

These sightings led to a fierce environmental campaign in which 15000 signatures were raised in petitions to stop the housing development of bushland at Wedderburn above O'Hares Creek.

This campaign eventually was successful and the Gorge



Mac's
KOALA
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29/11/03

and its associated bushland remain unspoiled.

Keith assisted us in the capture of our first koala to be ear-tagged way back in September 1991 and was a ready source of information about the history of koalas in the district.

It was always a joy to be in the bush with him because he knew it so intimately, had such a fund of stories and was so enthusiastic and knowledgeable.

But woe betide anyone caught abusing the bush.

Culprits could expect an educational lecture and a colourful tongue-lashing.

Keith's environmental contribution to the region has already been recognised in his being awarded Campbelltown Council's Heritage Medallion.

However, it would be fitting if the community could remember Keith's environmental contribution in some permanent and public

way. We would like to institute our own memorial by ensuring that a male in the next crop of cubs from our radio-collared females will be named "Keith".

However, it would be better if the next "Keith" were a long-term resident.

As young male cubs tend to wander out of the district, we would prefer that the name go to the next mature, resident male spotted by a community member.

So there is added incentive now to spot a koala.

One big, suitable fellow was spotted last Sunday crossing Wedderburn Road halfway up the slope on the Wedderburn side of the Gorge.

Unfortunately it had vanished by the time we arrived to attempt a capture.

Keep a lookout for him and remember the UWS koala hotline number 9962 9996.

Riverfest will have a look at lives of koalas

McAd 14/5/03

THE University of Western Sydney's koala conservation team will join in the celebrations at Riverfest at Koshigaya Park in Campbelltown on June 1.

Campbelltown City Council has organised the festival to celebrate the Year of Freshwater and inform the community about the environmental importance of the Georges River.

Associate professor Robert Close, from the School of Science, Food and Horticulture at UWS, says the display will feature a family tree of several female koalas that he has been following by radio-tracking and ear-tagging for the last 10 years.

"Their lives have been the major focus for the weekly column that we have been writing in the *Macarthur Advertiser* for

the last seven years," Mr Close said.

"In particular, two koalas that we track, Shirley and Lyn, are well-known to residents at Kentlyn.

"We will also have a forensic test on display. This test is based on the skulls of several animals that have died during the course of the studies. I'm sure this will fascinate people of all ages, who will have to work out ages, sexes and in some cases how and why the koalas died.

"The koalas help people appreciate the river and its associated bushland. The river and bushland are quite neglected and yet they are Campbelltown's finest natural resource."

One of the koala research unit's resident stuffed koalas, Roger, who is well known in the district as the 'No airport

in Holsworthy' campaign mascot, will also be on display for photos and admiration.

"Without feedback from the community we would seldom find new animals or relocate our tagged animals," Mr Close said.

"The people who call our hotline really make a difference. For people who want to call about sightings in the Macarthur region, the number is 9962 9996."

The river festival will include various other stalls from volunteer groups. It will also feature food stalls, music and entertainment and other activities.

For more information about Riverfest contact the council on 4645 4514.



Dog ban to save koalas

By REBECCA SENESCALL

PET dogs could be outlawed in new housing developments near Campbelltown's koala colonies, if the National Parks and Wildlife Service has its way.

A draft plan for NSW recommends that councils ban or restrict domestic dogs in any new residential developments near koala colonies that are threatened by dog attacks.

Pet dogs already living near koala colonies would have to be restrained with koala-proof fenced enclosures.

And owners of dogs that are "known to be aggressive towards koalas" would face penalties.

The NPWS is seeking public comment on its draft koala recovery plan, which is on exhibition until May 12.

The five-year plan is intended to reverse the decline of the koala, which is listed as a vulnerable species in NSW and has disappeared from many locations across the state since the 1940s.

According to the plan, many areas where koalas were now abundant faced "intense development pressures".

Dog attacks were a "significant cause of koala death and injury" - particularly in and around urban and rural-residential areas.

University of Western Sydney koala researcher Dr Robert Close said that five of the 85 koalas his team had followed in the Campbelltown area had died from dog attacks.

"We'd like to see dogs banned but it's a big ask ... restricting dogs is more likely to be what we'd be able to do," Dr Close said.

"There are animals that have lived for 10 years with dogs close by.

"The koalas most affected [by risk of dog

From page 1

attacks] would be the young ones, before they get wise."

Campbelltown mayor Brenton Banfield said it would be appropriate to ban pet dogs near Campbelltown's koala colonies.

The ban should be extended to cats as well, he said.

"Cats are very predatory.

"In the proposed Local Environment Plan for Wedderburn we have proposed strict controls on the keeping of domestic pets ... so that's an issue that we've already identified.

"What we try to do now is control dogs by ensuring strays are collected and taken to the pound.

"The main problem is animals that are dumped in the bush or strays - both dogs and cats.

"They often turn feral and don't just attack native fauna but attack other domestic animals as well."

Joy Hafey, manager of Wurrumbirra Sanctuary at Bargo, said she had seen cases of pet dog attacks on koalas in the Wollondilly region, though it was not common.

"I had to pick up a koala at Yanderra that had bled to death after a dog had punctured an artery in its limb," Ms Hafey said.

"We know there are koalas in the area - we see them on the expressway, and koalas are killed on the main street in Bargo. Koalas will cross ordinary blocks of land to get from one feed tree to another so pet dogs can be a problem.

"It's difficult to have a blanket ban on dogs, but they certainly should be chained up at night."

Ms Hafey is trying to raise about \$45,000 to start a survey of koalas in the Bargo River Catchment.

Turn to page 2

30th April 2003

in place more appropriate planning and environmental management measures. I consider that the environmental protection measures contained in the draft LEP No. 127 represent a significant step towards the long-term environmental management of the Plateau.

"I therefore reiterate the suggestion I put to you at the meeting that Council considers introducing these environmental protection measures as a first step while the issues of additional development and the future of agriculture are discussed between the Council and the relevant government agencies."

I believe that, by not resubmitting LEP 127, without the reduced 2 hectare subdivision component, Council lost an ideal opportunity to protect our precious koalas.

Perhaps exhibition of the draft Koala Recovery Plan will encourage Campbelltown Council to reconsider.

It is not too late to approve LEP 127 without the reduced subdivision standard and submit it to the new Minister.

COUNCILLOR VERLIE FOWLER
Campbelltown City Council

Dogs and koalas

MEASURES similar to those proposed by National Parks and Wildlife Service would have been introduced in Wedderburn if Campbelltown Council had taken the advice of the then Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning Andrew Refshauge.

On 21st July 1999 the Minister wrote:

"I agree with the Council that the current planning controls for the Plateau are not adequately protecting the environment of the Plateau.

"There is therefore an urgent need to put

More bark than bite in dog plan

MOST people don't have much time for the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

That's because the NPWS seems, at times, to be run by the lunatic fringe of politics.

That's not the case of course, but it's just the perception one gets.

Its role in national park backburning - or the lack of it - certainly enhanced that perception, which may or may not be fair.

Be that as it may, the NPWS plan to ban dogs from and around koala habitats looks like it has a lot of merit and is deserving of popular

23/4/03 nca



editor's corner

support. On first appearance, the plan, which surfaced on the weekend, seemed a bit harsh on dogs and pet owners.

But, if all aspects of the issue are taken into

consideration, the dog ban plan ought to get as much support as possible.

It was pleasing to see Campbelltown Council give its backing (story, page 1) and even go further by calling for the inclusion of cats into the equation.

This is an issue that vitally affects the Macarthur region and, strangely enough, Campbelltown in particular, the most urbanised of the three council areas in the region.

There is no doubt that there are substantial koala colonies both in

Wedderburn and Airds/Kentlyn.

To say we should do everything to protect the koalas in those areas comes out a bit like a motherhood statement: who would oppose such a public policy?

But it's a question of how we go about it, especially in the face of incontrovertible evidence that dogs are the biggest killers of koalas in places where suburbia meets the bush.

The public will have its say over the next few days, but the most likely scenario is a campaign to have pet

owners chain up their pets overnight.

A total ban, while more effective, would be a rather harsh measure, and would be unfair on those pet owners living near koala colonies who already do the right thing.

Nor should we go to the extremes where law-abiding residents are denied the pleasure of having pets around the home.

That would definitely be a case of barking up the wrong tree.

□ ERIC KONTOS

Dog ban plan to save our koalas

From page 1

attacks] would be the young ones, before they get wise."

Campbelltown mayor Brenton Banfield said it would be appropriate to ban pet dogs near Campbelltown's koala colonies.

The ban should be extended to cats as well, he said.

"Cats are very predatory.

"In the proposed Local Environment Plan for Wedderburn we have proposed strict controls on the keeping of domestic pets ... so that's an issue that we've already identified.

"What we try to do now is control dogs by ensuring strays are collected and taken to the pound.

"The main problem is animals that are dumped in the bush or strays - both dogs and cats.

"They often turn feral and don't just attack

native fauna but attack other domestic animals as well."

Joy Hafey, manager of Wirrimbirra Sanctuary at Bargo, said she had seen cases of pet dog attacks on koalas in the Wollondilly region, though it was not common.

"I had to pick up a koala at Yanderra that had bled to death after a dog had punctured an artery in its limb," Ms Hafey said.

"We know there are koalas in the area - we see them on the expressway, and koalas are killed on the main street in Bargo. Koalas will cross ordinary blocks of land to get from one feed tree to another so pet dogs can be a problem.

"It's difficult to have a blanket ban on dogs, but they certainly should be chained up at night."

Ms Hafey is trying to raise about \$45,000 to start a survey of koalas in the Bargo River Catchment.

Dog ban to save koalas

By REBECCA SENESCALL

23/4/03 nca

PET dogs could be outlawed in new housing developments near Campbelltown's koala colonies, if the National Parks and Wildlife Service has its way.

A draft plan for NSW recommends that councils ban or restrict domestic dogs in any new residential developments near koala colonies that are threatened by dog attacks.

Pet dogs already living near koala colonies would have to be restrained with koala-proof fenced enclosures.

And owners of dogs that are "known to be aggressive towards koalas" would face penalties.

The NPWS is seeking public comment on its draft koala recovery plan, which is on exhibition until May 12.

The five-year plan is intended to reverse the decline of the koala, which is listed as a vulnerable species in NSW and has disappeared from many locations across the state since the 1940s.

According to the plan, many areas where koalas were now abundant faced "intense development pressures".

Dog attacks were a "significant cause of koala death and injury" - particularly in and around urban and rural-residential areas.

University of Western Sydney koala researcher Dr Robert Close said that five of the 85 koalas his team had followed in the Campbelltown area had died from dog attacks.

"We'd like to see dogs banned but it's a big ask ... restricting dogs is more likely to be what we'd be able to do," Dr Close said.

"There are animals that have lived for 10 years with dogs close by.

"The koalas most affected [by risk of dog

Turn to page 2

Macarthur Advertiser 23rd April 2003



23/4/2003

Marly's short life valuable



LAST week we told the story of finding Marly in poor condition out in Wedderburn bush and about our plans to feed her up before releasing her.

All seemed to be going well, Marly was eating vigorously. Then one afternoon we discovered her having a fit of some kind, arching backwards, waving her head to-and-fro and making a paddling motion with her feet.

After a short time, sadly, she died in Lynn's arms.

Naturally, we felt dreadful but realised that we were in fact lucky to have found her in the bush and that her rediscovery allows us to learn more about how our koalas live and die.

For example we were able to compare her life with that of a Kentlyn female, June (Shirley's cub) who is the same age.

When we rediscovered June last month she weighed 7.3kg, had a head length of 131mm and had a cub herself, which is now 4-5 months old.

In contrast, Marly weighed only 5.2kg, had a head length of 114mm and had an immature pouch.

Clearly the development of the two young females had been markedly different.

What could have caused this difference?

For starters, Marly faced the fires of Christmas 2001 and as a weanling would have had to survive on limited food supplies

until regrowth of the eucalypt foliage.

She may never have completely surmounted this early set-back.

Alternatively, the differences in fertility between Kentlyn and Wedderburn may be the cause.

A major finding of Steven's thesis, in fact, was that the higher fertility of Kentlyn soils was associated with Kentlyn females being heavier, breeding earlier and more often than Wedderburn females.

Another possibility was that Marly was ill or damaged.

To test this possibility, Dr Tony Ross at Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute conducted a post-mortem, assisted by Dr Gary Ashton from Campbelltown

Veterinary Hospital.

Although they found that Marly was skinny, all her organs, apart from a little congestion in the lungs and a slight inflammation of the small intestine, seemed normal.

Nor were there signs of spider or snake-bite or poisoning.

Tissues were taken for lab analysis and unless these results show anything unusual we shall document Marly's death as the result of continued harsh environmental conditions.

We ask people to watch out for koalas and call the UWS hotline 9962 9996.

□ **By Robert Close and Steven Ward**



Beware pets on the prowl



FOR the first time in many months the koala hotline did not ring last week to report a koala sighting.

That's not surprising as the koala mating season is now at an end and there has been enough rain to revive the eucalypt trees.

So the adult koalas are unlikely to be moving to places where they will be easily seen by humans.

The youngsters, however, may start to move away from their parents, although other studies have indicated that this movement usually happens in spring.

We did, however, receive a call about a dead swamp wallaby at Kentlyn.

This is the most common local wallaby and, as discussed in previous columns, is dark brown with black feet and tail and stands about a metre high.

The dead animal was a juvenile female that had teeth wounds to its thigh indicating an attack by a dog.

A large abscess on its neck suggested that the attack may have happened some time before its death

Unfortunately, dog attacks are a constant problem for wildlife that live on the border of the city and the bush.

We know of six local koalas killed by dogs and only one of these was killed after entering a yard occupied by a dog.

This means that all the others were attacked by dogs roaming from home and consequently their deaths were preventable.

A study at Jervis Bay showed that much damage to local wildlife

has been done by dogs whose owners have been unaware of the nightly hunting by their pets.

Once again we implore dog owners to control their pets and to investigate any unusual barking.

We were particularly interested in obtaining a DNA sample from the dead swamp wallaby

because UWS student and Ruse resident, Amanda Brindley, has just started her Honours project on local macropods (the name used to include both kangaroos and wallabies, literally meaning "big feet").

Amanda is especially interested in the population of wallaroos (also called hill kangaroos) that live within Mt Annan Botanic Gardens and she will conduct a DNA study using cells obtained from the faecal pellets of these animals.

Because swamp wallabies also live inside the gardens we need to clearly distinguish the DNA of both species.

Amanda is also keen to collect DNA samples from any local, road-killed macropods.

If you know of any road accidents involving macropods contact the UWS koala hotline 9962 9996.

By **STEVEN WARD**
and **ROBERT CLOSE**

The Macca

NATION & WORLD

San Francisco Chronicle 10/6/02

Hazardous habitat

Isolated by development, Australia's koalas face added threat of fires

By Todd Woody

CHRONICLE FOREIGN SERVICE

SYDNEY

B iologist Robert Close was at home enjoying his Christmas pudding when he spotted smoke raging across the countryside. As night fell, his heart leaped while he watched flames four miles away marching toward a colony of 200 koalas that he had been studying for a decade.

"I thought, 'This is it,'" Close recalled. He hoped that the cuddly, gum-leaf chewing, teddy-bear-like koalas had escaped westward.

The estimated 100 fires — of which half were deliberately lit — continued to burn out of control throughout the state of New South Wales until mid-January, incinerating 1.7 million acres of bushland.

No humans died, but slow-moving koalas, wombats and other native wildlife were not so fortunate. With 60-foot-high walls of flames consuming entire forests in a matter of minutes, there was nowhere to run — or hop — for even the most fit.

Because fewer than 10,000 koalas remain in New South Wales and only a handful were rescued from the blaze, conservationists feared the worst.

Koalas' range makes counting difficult

Brian Gilligan, director of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, predicted that "no doubt thousands (of koalas) have been killed or injured in the fires," capturing headlines and raising new concerns about the survival of the quintessential Australian icon.

Four months later, no one can say for sure how many koalas perished in the blazes because no one knows how many were there in the first place.

Solitary creatures that spend up to 20 hours a day asleep in the forks of eucalyptus trees, koalas are territorial. A single animal can occupy a range of up to 100 acres, which makes counting them exceedingly difficult. Estimates of Australia's koala population vary from 100,000 to 400,000 and are a matter of fierce debate among environmentalists and government officials.

Scientists such as Close are finding that some forests may never again echo with the piglike bel-



TODD WOODY / For The Chro

Wildlife rescuer Gayler Parker holds Sweet Pea, a burned koala she is nursing back to health. The koala is recuperating in Parker's backyard in converted aviary with a makeshift gum tree.

The unbearably cute koala

Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*)

- Three subspecies: Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland
- Males are about 30 inches long, females 28 inches long. Adults weigh between 14 and 26 pounds. At birth they weigh one-fifth of an ounce and are about the size of a bee.
- Common lifespan varies due to environmental stress factors but is



"It looked like a bomb had hit it."

...continued to burn out of control throughout the state of New South Wales in January, incinerating 1.7 million acres of land. Humans died, but slow-moving koalas, and other native wildlife were not so lucky. With 60-foot-high walls of flames consuming entire forests in a matter of minutes, there was nowhere to run — or hop — for even the few koalas that remained. In New South Wales and only a handful were rescued from the blaze, conservationists feared the

Koalas' range makes counting difficult

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Months later, no one can say for sure how many koalas perished in the blazes because no one knows how many were there in the first

place. Many creatures that spend up to 20 hours a day in the forks of eucalyptus trees, koalas are a logistical nightmare. A single animal can occupy a territory of up to 100 acres, which makes counting them exceedingly difficult. Estimates of Australian koala population vary from 100,000 to 200,000 and are a matter of fierce debate among ecologists and government officials. Scientists such as Close are finding that some koalas may never again echo with the piglike bellows of their more famous male counterparts.

Associate professor at the University of New South Wales, Close has ventured almost daily into a 1,400-acre koala habitat near the Sydney suburb of Campbelltown to search for koalas and to care for the survivors.

Recently, the lanky, gray-bearded 53-year-old biologist went looking for 10-year-old Francesca, a female koala he has tracked with a radio collar since 1995.

Using a handheld antenna, he first heard only a faint buzz of white noise. Minutes later came the "click, click" sound that denotes the presence of a koala.

Pointing the antenna toward a ridge, Close found Francesca nestled high in a gum tree with a 1-month-old baby in her pouch, her forearms gripping the trunk like a pillow. "That Francesca survived the fires is nothing short of miraculous," he said.

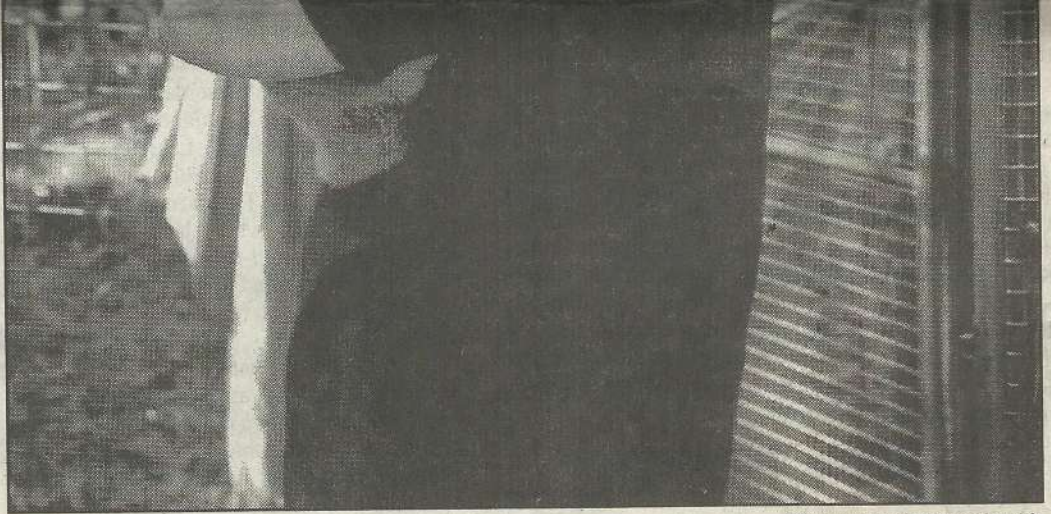
Koalas are mainly threatened by the destruction of their eucalyptus-tree forests to make way for highways, housing and agriculture, say other experts, including Dan Lunney, a senior researcher with the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service.

A highway through their home

Perched on her majestic gray gum tree, Francesca seems to be perched in magnificent isolation, surrounded by acres of pristine bush. But Campbelltown's red-brick tract homes are just three miles away, and officials plan to build a highway through this koala habitat.

Until they were formally granted protection in the 1930s, millions of koalas were shot by hunters for their soft fur. They now enjoy varying degrees of protection in the four Australian states where they are found.

Only one state, New South Wales, offers legal safeguards for their habitat, and the municipalities in charge of such protection almost always promote economic development. In other states, koalas find themselves restricted to isolated



TODD WOODY / For The Chronicle

Wildlife rescuer Gaylene Parker holds Sweet Pea, a burned koala she is nursing back to health. The koala is recuperating in Parker's backyard in a converted aviary with a makeshift gum tree.

The unbearably cute koala

Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*)

- Three subspecies: Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland
- Males are about 30 inches long, females 28 inches long. Adults weigh between 14 and 26 pounds. At birth they weigh one-fifth of an ounce and are about the size of a bee.
- Common lifespan varies due to environmental stress factors but is typically 13 to 18 years. Koalas will sleep up to 20 hours a day.



Sources: Phillip Island Nature Park (1998); University of Minnesota; "Koalas - Australia's Ancient Ones" by Ken Phillips

■ Koalas are not bears—they just look like them. They are nocturnal marsupials, related to the kangaroo and wombat. Female koalas have a rear-facing pouch in which the newborn reside and first develop. The gestation period is 34 to 36 days.

■ Koalas eat only eucalyptus leaves, drawing moisture from the leaves. They eat about 2.5 pounds of leaves a day.

JOHN BLANCHARD / The Chronicle

areas, one fire is all it takes to extinguish a particular colony, experts say. For example, koalas have not been seen in Royal National Park south of Sydney since 1994, after a fire destroyed most of that preserve.

"If you are fragmenting koala habitat with highways and housing, bushfires can prove devastating," Lunney said.

In the rural region called Wollondilly about 50 miles southwest of Sydney, veteran wildlife rescuer Gaylene Parker has spent three months nursing back to health a year-old koala named Sweet Pea, who was found burned and clinging to a tree in January. When Parker searched the woodlands for Sweet Pea's mother — young koalas stay in their mother's territory during the first year — she found no animals, dead or alive.

"It looked like a bomb had hit it," Parker said as she bottle-fed a 4-month-old wombat, a bear-like marsupial.

Sweet Pea is recuperating in Parker's backyard in a converted aviary with a makeshift gum tree. The 7½-pound, gray-and-white beast appeared content as she lazed in the eucalyptus leaves that Parker collected from neighboring forests. But up close, there were visible signs of trauma — a

scorch mark on her hip and pink spots from burned paws.

Although Sweet Pea will eventually return to the wild, her home remains a dangerous place. The fire stripped the woodlands of ground cover, leaving young koalas like her vulnerable to attacks by wedge-tailed eagles and dingoes, the wild Australian dog.

It will be years before biologists determine the full impact of the 2001-02 bushfires on the koalas' survival. Scientists are confident that even if half of a particular colony perished, the population will bounce back in five to 10 years — if the habitat remains intact.

But that's a big if. With the Australian economy booming, the once-rural areas continue to fall to bulldozers.

Back in Campbelltown, Close said he believes most of his koalas survived the fire because the path of the flames allowed many animals to escape into gullies.

But next time, he predicted, the koalas might not be so fortunate.

"If the fire came in from a different direction, we could lose the lot," he said.

"It looked like a bomb had hit it."

GAYLENE PARKER on the damaged koala habitat

Soil is the key to survival of koalas

25/9/02 MC AP

By KAREN SMITH

AFTER seven years of tracking and studying Campbelltown's cutest inhabitants, Steven Ward has submitted his thesis on the koalas of south west Sydney.

Ward and his supervisor, University of Western Sydney Campbelltown campus associate professor Robert Close, handed over a copy of the 250 page thesis to Campbelltown library.

Dr Ward said the aim was to determine how koalas survived and coped in the area.

"The key finding was that soil fertility was very important," Dr Ward said.

He said the Holsworthy Firing Range was mostly sandstone and the soil had a low fertility level.

As a result the trees contained on the site were not a very good food source.

However the shale-based soils found in St Helens Park, Campbelltown and Kentlyn were much more fertile.

"The female koalas in shale areas were bigger, had more young, and were in better condition," Dr Ward said.

"If you lost these areas you'd have to question whether the population could continue."

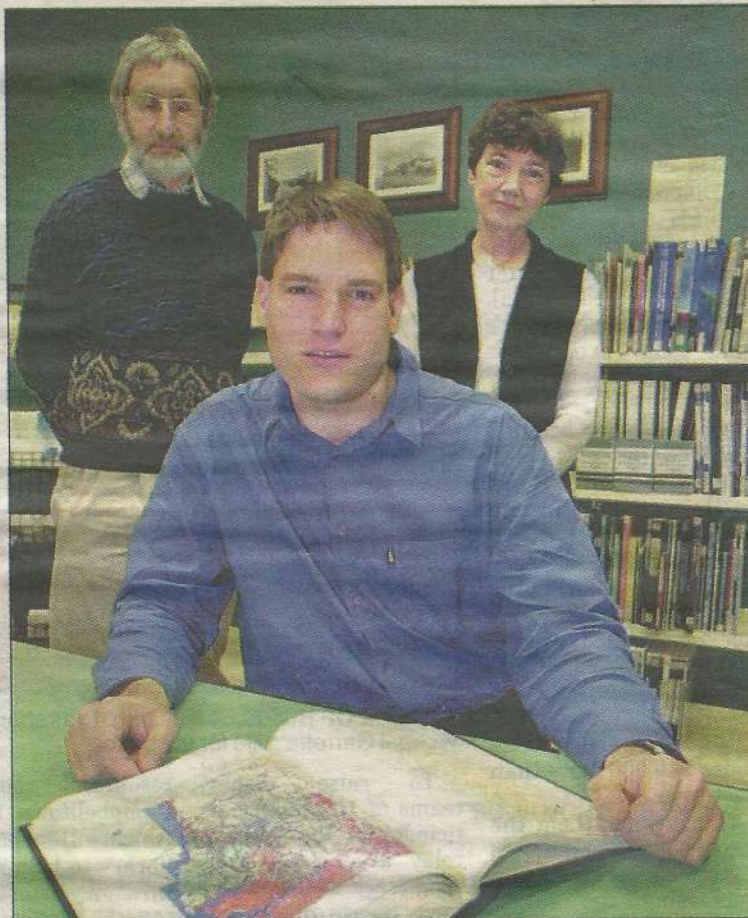
The areas surveyed included Campbelltown, the Southern Highlands with some sightings in the Blue Mountains.

However, Campbelltown was considered to be the most active breeding area.

Professor Close started ear tagging local koalas in 1990, and since then 75 koalas have been ear tagged.

He estimated there were about 90 to 200 koalas living in the region.

Dr Ward completed a Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in botany and zoology at The Uni-



LIFE'S WORK . . . Steven Ward (front) with Robert Close and central branch librarian Jo Radkewicz. **Photo: JASON HAMILTON**

versity of Western Australia.

He studied fire ecology when he did honours at The University of Wollongong in 1994. In mid 1995 he started the koala project for his PhD.

He said he was attracted to koalas because the scholarship was available and he had studied mammals as part of his honours.

"I wasn't looking at doing a PhD, but it was too good an offer to pass up," Dr Ward said.

"I knew I would pick up some valuable skills and it was an interesting project as well.

"There's not many scientific projects that involve the community, but we had their support through The Macarthur Advertiser." The biggest challenge now faced by Dr Ward is to put his theory into practice.

"There's not that many academic positions at the moment, so I'm looking at environmental education positions, planning or environmental consulting."

Professor Close said he was looking for more sponsorship to continue the scholarship program now that Dr Ward had finished.

Enquiries: 4620 3203.

N Baker
Picton

21/5/02 Chron

Koala statement disputed

I'D like to correct a statement in an article Curious Crusader Rewarded (*The Chronicle*, May 14) that results of our koala research stopped a proposed development at O'Hares Creek in the 1990s.

That development was stopped by the sustained efforts over many years of local conservation groups and a petition signed by many thousands of community members.

Anyone interested in the history of the anti-development campaign can view newspaper reports and documents that we have collected and filed under Wedderburn koalas in the local history section of Campbelltown Library.

Associate Professor Robert Close
Koala Research Unit
University of Western Sydney

Daily Telegraph 11th September 2002

Koala-friendly community's animal lifeline

By NATALIE WILLIAMS

THE first koala-friendly land release by Landcom goes to auction next month.

Owners of the 21 blocks will have to use timber fencing, provide a rope climb out of swimming pools for koalas and will not be allowed to have a dog.

The homesites at the aptly named Koala Bay, at Tanilba Bay in Port Stephens north of Newcastle, go to auction on October 12.

In July, Port Stephens Council launched a long-awaited comprehensive koala plan

of management to protect the region's koalas — the most significant southerly population in the state.

Council general manager Peter Gesling said: "The community is very strongly supportive of the plan and the need to maintain the biodiversity of the area, which includes the koalas."

Kamini Parashar from Landcom said the organisation was "testing the waters" with its Tanilba Bay land release.

"No one knows yet if conditions like the banning of dogs will have any effect on the

sale," she said. The new development takes into account the unique environmental characteristics of the area and includes a Koala Plan of Management which helps to protect native fauna.

Landcom planted hundreds of "koala feed" trees on the land release which must be left intact by home builders.

Traffic will also be limited to 40km/h throughout the Koala Bay development, which also includes public reserves and pathways for residents to enjoy the natural bushland setting.

Macarthur Advertiser 6th March 2002

Clean-up day successful

THE first clean-up Ingleburn day held recently has been hailed as a huge success.

Campbelltown councillors Aaron Rule, Steven Chaytor, Bob Thompson and Werriwa federal MP Mark Latham joined 40 other residents to clean up the area.

Cr Rule said people came from all over Campbelltown to take part, including Eagle Vale.

"The clean-up day was one of the outcomes from the anti-graffiti summit held in Ingleburn late last year," Cr Rule said.

Cr Chaytor said several methods were used to remove the graffiti.

"These included painting, chemical removal, blasting and tree planting," Cr Chaytor said.

"Some of the real problem spots — Cumberland Road and Swan Reserve — were specifically targeted."

Cr Rule said the clean up day was the start of an on-going campaign.

"If the community is going to win this battle it will require a concerted effort over a long period of time," Cr Rule said.

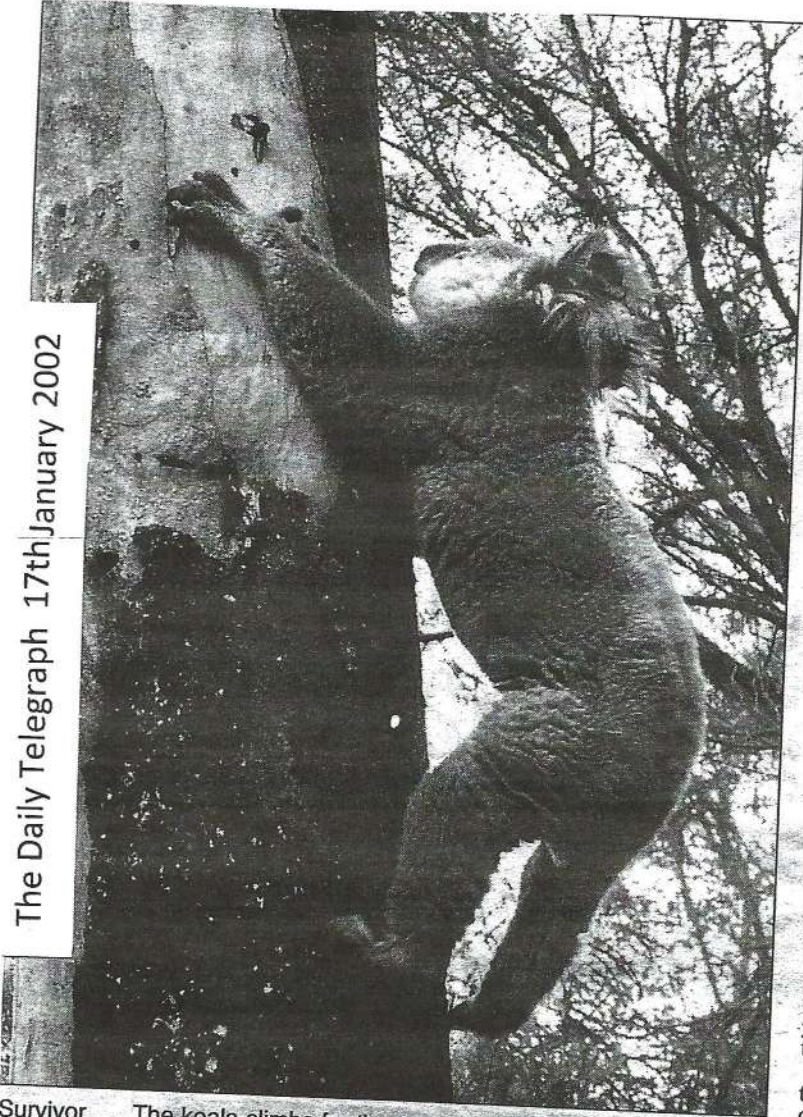
"The clean-up Ingleburn day marks a change in community attitudes.

"By making a stand, residents were saying that they have had enough and that this form of vandalism can no longer be tolerated."

Both councillors thanked the residents who showed up on the day, as well as Ingleburn RSL, Ingleburn Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and local Ingleburn community groups for their support.

ELBOW GREASE . . . Councillor Steven Chaytor gets his hands dirty at the recent Ingleburn clean-up day, hailed as a great success.

The Daily Telegraph 17th January 2002



Koalas survive the fire storms

DT 17/1/02

By SIMON BENSON

Environment Reporter

KOALAS' ability to survive fire is astounding, say scientists.

When charcoaled remains of forests suggest that no living creature could possibly remain, they continually rise from the ashes, even if a little dazed and confused.

"There are definitely some general behaviours that increase the likelihood of koalas surviving during fires," researcher Steve Ward said yesterday.

"But how they behave when the firefront comes though... we don't know. As a researcher it is an unsafe place to be."

Evolution, it seems, has given them an ability to adapt to fire.

Yesterday Mr Ward and the National Parks and Wildlife Service released a young male koala found two days ago on the F6.

It had wandered out of the fire-ravaged Heathcote National Park to the amazement of passersby.

And it seems this creature is not alone.

"The outlook has been very positive for the koalas south of Sydney," Mr Ward said. "We have a total of six new animals that have been reported... on top of the ones already known in the Heathcote, Wedderburn and Campbelltown areas."

Mr Ward's supervisor Dr Robert Close believes the koalas seem to know where areas of a forest may be less likely to burn, such as damp gullies, and move into those when a firefront is threatening.

Survivor... The koala climbs for the treetop after his release (below) at the Heathcote National Park.

Pictures: TRACEE LEA



Mac's Koala Club



A Fairfax Community Newspaper

January 2002

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This month in Mac's Koala Club

- Battle to save the koalas after fires
- Mac's Jokes
- Meet Kira & Stevie
- Sad end to adorable koalas
- Member Birthdays



Battle To Save The Koalas After Fires

With the recent bushfires ravaging significant parts of Wedderburn, (near Campbelltown) University of Western Sydney koala researcher Dr Robert Close was worried about the welfare of his precious subjects.

From his home in Ambarvale on Christmas Day, Dr Close could see the fire front moving across the horizon to the south-east and feared many of Wedderburn's koalas would be killed by the flames.

Dr Close and his koala trackers have been busy during the bushfires and their aftermath rescuing koalas and searching for them to determine their welfare.

He said no koalas had been found dead, but he was concerned that large areas of their food source had been destroyed by fire.

"However, they seem to be able to pick out little areas of trees that are not burnt," Dr Close said.

He said so far four koalas had managed to survive the huge inferno which ripped through about 60 percent of the region.

Dr Close received a call on Christmas night from Angela

Taylor who was part of a firefighting team working at Kantanna Road, Wedderburn. A terrified koala was desperately trying to escape flames which had travelled out of Pheasants Creek.

The koala had sought refuge high in a slim grey gum and firefighters had cleared surrounding litter and doused the surrounds with water.

Dr Close decided not to capture the koala as there was nowhere safe to relocate the animal, and he did not want to stress the koala any more.

Tracker Lynn Coxall and Dr Close returned the next morning and found the koala, known as Victor, to be safe.

"Victor had learnt a good survival method: go to where the firetruck's lights are flashing," Dr Close said.

Victor is the two-year-old son of Francesca who lives at the end of Victoria Road, on a ridge between Pheasants Creek and O'Hares Creek. "That area received the brunt of the fires," Dr Close said.

Despite this, Francesca was spotted high up in a stringy bark.

However her baby Marlee

was not with her.

Dr Close said he was concerned that she might not be able to find enough green succulent leaves to eat and if intense heat and smoke had damaged her eyes and lungs.

An old male koala also was discovered at the Wedderburn gorge and another male was discovered at Wedderburn airport on December 28.

When Dr Close went out the next morning the koala had disappeared, but returned several days later.

"Everything around him was burnt for about 600m, Dr Close said. "I do not know how he survived."

Dr Close and volunteers had been going out to the fire affected areas every day searching for survivors.

"Surviving koalas should be easier to spot after the fires and their distinctive pellets are more noticeable on the ash-covered ground." He said.

Dr Close would be grateful if koala sightings were reported by calling the UWS koala hot-line pager on 9962 9996.

By Karen Smith



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and' Now or never at ADI site

DT 14/7/01

It is time everything else took a back seat and the entire 1545ha of the ADI site at St Marys be left intact forever and a day, even if it means people are excluded on a recreational basis.

We have shown too many times the destruction we are capable of against ourselves or all things natural, regardless of intention, so it's time to forget about Lend Lease's pockets.

The people who require housing will get housing elsewhere. It's not people who are on the verge of extinction.

As for providing 9000 jobs, my own job is on the line, working in the textile manufacturing industry. It's a common occurrence to read of companies going bankrupt or moving offshore to find cheaper labour. But, come election time, rather than vote for a party to secure my job, I will vote for the Save The ADI Party.

It is now or never. It is time to show we can put Mother Nature first and not let the dollar rule.

G. Potts, Kingswood

The entire ADI site at St Marys should be saved, not just the morsel that developer Lend Lease would like to keep.

The entire area outlined should be preserved as a regional park to protect the future generation of kangaroos and other species of wildlife in the area.

G. Tait, Greystanes

The point made by Simon Benson regarding homes or bushland for Sydney's west ("Now or never for the west," *Daily Telegraph*, July 12) is one that has put Penrith City Council at odds with both state and federal governments for many years.

While we are better placed than either government to identify environmentally significant areas in our city and forge a more balanced development future for it, both continue to put increasing pressure on us and other Sydney local authorities to support maximum housing development outcomes.

The ADI site at St Marys is just one of three former defence sites in Penrith City in which the Federal Government has aimed for the largest financial return through housing. We have argued for a more balanced outcome.

Our application for Natural Heritage Trust funding to save the 178ha of AHC-listed lands on the ADI site has been gathering dust in Canberra for more than three years awaiting the decision of Fed-

eral Environment Minister Robert Hill.

Despite his reluctance to meet us to discuss our concerns and make a decision on our application, it is hoped that at last our call to preserve at least the Heritage-listed lands on the site is no longer falling on deaf ears.

David Bradbury, Mayor, Penrith City Council

Why should Sydney follow other cities around the world in clearing and developing land to unbearable limits? Australians, generally, have long appreciated open spaces. First it was our Aboriginal brothers and sisters, then those who followed. Later it was our World War I servicemen who wrote home for eucalypt leaves for reminders of where their real home was. Zealous development in the last 30 or more years is destroying a valuable link with our forebears by making us people of close spaces.

The ADI site, St Marys, has the most potential to allow those of us in western Sydney to travel less distance to appreciate the greatest diversity of our native flora and fauna in the natural state. Sadly, development plans destroy this potential and critically impact on survival prospects of native fauna on the site.

Then there is the immorality of the government, in the

1940s, hastily forcing people off their farms with minimal compensation "for the war effort", only for the Government today to both capitalise on this windfall and line the pockets of executives and shareholders of a corporation seeking to develop the ADI site.

Such is the pity of the ADI site at St Marys.

Wayne Olling, Seven Hills

The only sensible solution would be to leave the site intact. Kangaroos and emus will need the open native grasslands on the western precinct.

Visitors to the site are amazed by the regeneration on the north-west sector, McGarritys Hill. The kangaroos graze through the area without disturbing this process.

Colin Audet, Werrington

I agree that the kangaroo colony on the ADI site is the last significant population in the Sydney basin and should be preserved. But in response to other comments in your editorial ("Kangaroo colony must survive," *Daily Telegraph*, July 12), you seem to imply that the Federal Government is addressing the concerns of voters by adding an additional 178ha of Aust-

ralian Heritage Commission-listed lands to the proposed 630ha (AHC-listed) regional park.

The Federal Government under the AHC Act must protect this 178ha anyway. Finance Minister John Fahey, who has the final call on the fate of this disputed 178ha of the National Estate, has yet to indicate its protection. Now zoned residential, this disputed 178ha is worth some \$80 million to the Federal Government.

You claim adding the 178ha is a sensible suggestion and will allow development and the survival of the kangaroos. The reality is that any housing on the ADI site will result in the removal of the 2m perimeter fence that protects the entire site, including the kangaroos. Once this fence is removed, the kangaroos and wildlife will roam and will be exposed to cars, cats, dogs and people.

The Federal Government needs to understand that the voters of western Sydney do not want a 178ha compromise; they want the whole of the ADI site protected.

Geoff Brown, Kingswood Park

I have lived in the west of Sydney my whole life, 29 of those years in St Marys. The ADI site should be used for housing.

When we first moved to St Marys, half of it was bush. This is only progress.

If it doesn't go ahead, people will soon be living and commuting to Sydney from Bathurst, with no infrastructure or sufficient transport to cope.

Yes, the native animals will suffer, but they can be moved or kept in the reserve that will be put aside for them.

The development must go ahead. Sydney needs houses and jobs within the Sydney basin, not land space, which in my time in St Marys no one has used.

Tony Micallef, St Marys

The ADI site should be saved and made into a regional park for western Sydney. We don't need 8000 houses that will bring 24,000 people to the area.

The Federal Government still owns the site and it can turn the whole thing around by stopping the development. We need our "lungs of green" in the west.

This is our last chance to preserve unique bushland; along with the bushland, if

this development goes ahead we will lose the biodiversity of the site and the last mobs of kangaroos and emus that roam wild and free.
Sonia Bennett, Seven Hills

Daily Telegraph 14th July 2001



Picture: MARC McCORMACK.

anderer

He is now thought to be the only koala in the Loftus area. "He is roaming over a 2km range. It tells us that he is the only animal in the Loftus area and that there are not too many around," Dr Close said. "He is surviving and the fact he is not moving around is interesting. They usually move around until they find a female."

Daily Telegraph

13th July 2001

West outraged at development

By NICOLETTE BURKE

PRESERVING an environmental sanctuary is important for the residents of western Sydney, which has experienced rapid population growth in recent years.

Many wrote to *The Daily Telegraph* to express their outrage at the imminent development of the ADI site at St Marys.

"The residents are in no doubt about what is best for the future of the environment and their children. The problem is, no one is inviting us to make that decision,"

wrote Peter Humphreys, a resident in the west for 35 years.

Ian Maynard, of Lethbridge Park said: "Any measures to develop the site, even partially, will upset the present balance between the flora and fauna on the site. Do we really need to suburbanise every square metre of our congested city?"

Curtis van Coevorden of Werrington Downs feels the frustration of the electorate will be shown at the election.

"We may not be the most militant people in Australia, but unless the Government

heeds the west on this issue, then the kangaroos aren't the only ones whose wellbeing will be threatened," he wrote.

In the only display of support for the redevelopment, Mary-Lynne Taylor of La Perouse said: "St Marys is well served for parks and reserves... and Australia is not short of kangaroos! What we need is homes — and ADI has been going on for 10 years. Let's get on with it."

Tell us your opinion on the future of the ADI site. Contact us by fax on 9288 2608 or e-mail bensons@dailytelegraph.com.au

'No koalas on ADI'

DT 13-7-2001

Request for site survey 'ignored'

By SIMON BENSON
Environment Reporter

SCIENTISTS claim requests to conduct a major koala survey on the controversial government-owned ADI site in western Sydney are being ignored by the Federal Government, which is planning to develop the land.

A request to conduct a survey on the 1500ha former Defence Department land at St Marys has been with ComLand for at least two months. *The Daily Telegraph* has learned.

Dr Robert Close, from the University of Western Sydney, asked ComLand for permission to survey the site as part of a research project on May 9.

ComLand is the company set up by the Federal Government which is now in partnership with Lend Lease to undertake a \$2 billion, 8000-home development of the site. ComLand claims extensive fauna survey work had already failed to locate any koalas on the site.

The development, approved by the NSW Government, would face major hurdles if the site was found to be koala habitat — which is now law protected.

ComLand has so far denied Dr Close and researchers access to the site, but a spokesman for the development claimed they were still assessing the application and had not yet made a decision.

"I wouldn't be surprised to find koalas there," Dr Close said yesterday. "We know they are all around Sydney ... we know there are animals from Campbelltown and they move 20 to 30km and this site has plenty of koala feed trees."

The issue of koalas on the site follows calls for a 2000-strong kangaroo colony on the site to be listed by the NSW Scientific Committee as threatened. It also comes amid a mounting political battle over the site which falls in the marginal seat of Lindsay.

Penrith mayor and the Labor candidate David Bradbury, who will run against sitting



Out and about . . . Eric the tagged koala takes a break in a gum tree at Loftus yesterday.

What's a year to Eric the w

By SIMON BENSON

THREE years ago Eric the koala was found in a cemetery in Sutherland. He was captured by biologists, tagged and released.

Since then the young male has been doing the rounds of suburban backyards and yesterday turned up for the first time in a year.

After regular sightings in the first two years after he was tagged Eric has recently been elusive.

Researchers are gaining a better understanding of the behaviour of the city's koalas which are now thought to be traversing the suburbs of southern and western Sydney.

"We are getting more and more reports of koalas around Sydney," Dr

Robert Close, from the University of Western Sydney, said.

"We know animals are moving around the place over a wide range. They are getting from Georges River to the Nepean catchment.

"It is surprising because prior to 1986 we didn't know of them on the south side of Sydney." But Eric has puzzled the researchers.

Liberal member Jackie Kelly in the coming federal election, yesterday attacked the Government for not releasing details of the joint venture arrangement between it and Lend Lease.

Penrith council has for the past 12 months lobbied for the protection of an extra 178ha on top of the 630ha promised as a regional park within the development — which the Federal Government is now considering.

It has also applied for federal government funding to cover the cost of any compensation payment to the developers

for extra conservation areas.

"The Federal Government should halt the entire development until it reveals its joint venture deal with Lend Lease and its financial commitments," Mr Bradbury said. "There has been a lot of talk of costs to scale back the development but until the deal is made public we are being kept in the dark."

Danny Mackin, deputy mayor of Blacktown council which also has a stake in the site, claimed the fight to save ADI was over.

"I believe it will be developed

... we can't stop that. A deal has been done with Lend Lease," he said. "I would like to see it as a national park but it is gone."

A spokesman for the Save the ADI Site party claimed there was nothing stopping the Government making it a national park.

"They did it last year for the other surplus defence land around the harbour and there is no reason, except arrogant disregard for the people of western Sydney, why John Howard's Government cannot do it for this conservation jewel," said Noel Plumb.

Fruit bat flies into stormy debate

SINCE last week's frenzy of koala sightings, we have had no calls.

This apparent lack of koala activity, however, means that we can talk about another animal that feeds on eucalypts - the grey-headed flying fox. This animal, also called a fruit bat, feeds mainly on blossoms of gum trees and related species such as banksias and paperbarks.

It also eats fruits of a variety of native and introduced species.

As it feeds and flies from tree to tree, it pollinates the native species and also spreads seeds. This behaviour

Tiddeman, a bat researcher, estimates that 100,000 bats are illegally killed each year.

This killing, added to the continued clearing of bat habitat, means that the numbers of grey-headed flying foxes are falling rapidly.

As a result of this decline, the bat has now been formally listed as a threatened species in NSW.

In an effort to find solutions to the problem of protecting both the orchards and the bats, The Royal Zoological Society (people interested in our wildlife) has organised a forum of scientists,

orchardists, wildlife managers and community groups to brainstorm the issue.

This meeting will be addressed by representatives of all these groups.

A local orchardist, John Bicknell, whose controversial letters on the topic often appear in this paper, will be one of the many speakers.

The public is invited to the meeting which will be held in the theatre, William St, Australian Museum on Saturday, July 28 from 9am to 5pm.

Registration is \$40 for non members of the society, which includes lunch and morning tea.

To register, ring the RZS office on 9969 7336 and leave your name.

For program details call Dan Lunney on 9585 6489. It will be a fascinating and hopefully fruitful day.

To report a koala sighting, call the University of Western Sydney hotline on 9962 9996. To hear a koala bellowing, call 4620 3200. Copies of our koala video can be obtained from The Macarthur Advertiser office, or from Quondong Visitor Information Centre or by sending \$25 to us at the university.

By Steven Ward and Robert Close.

mac's koala club

makes it an important part of bush-life and vital for the long-term survival of our forests.

Unfortunately, the bat also eats fruit from orchards and this causes problems for the orchardist who is forced to cover his crop with expensive netting.

Many orchardists also shoot the bats and Chris

Our friend Shirley's still making news

A MARVELLOUS photograph of our famous koala, Shirley, with her latest cub appeared recently on page five of a major Sydney tabloid newspaper.

The accompanying article described how Shirley had survived a major fire in her territory, the regular presence of trail bikes, dogs beneath her favourite trees, and the constant danger from cars and yahoos.

The article said despite these

mac's koala club

difficulties, Shirley and her fellow female koalas at Campbelltown still manage to produce a young every year with the result that the population seemed to be thriving.

All the above is true, but the article left the reader with the feeling that the koalas will survive in Campbelltown no matter what we humans can throw at them.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

The reason that Shirley is doing so well is because her area contains a blend of soil types that allow her to be so healthy.

The soil enables her small patch of bushland

to contain the right mix of food trees and shelter trees that give her the required nutrients and shelter.

In addition, her area fronts the Georges River, so her regular male visitor Grant can move from female to female along the river without having to cross roads.

Likewise, her cubs can move along the river when they leave, without encountering people, cars or dogs.

So Campbelltown's koalas depend on the soil, vegetation and presence of the Georges River and creeks that run into it.

If any of these components are damaged then the koala colony will not survive.

The surviving bushland must be maintained for this reason.

Conserving this area will protect not only koalas but a variety of

13/6/01
other animal species as well. Another tagged koala, Kevin, turned up this week.

He lives in Lyn's territory in Kentlyn and we last saw him in October last year.

On this occasion he was sitting in a small tree bellowing his heart out.

This is unusual because the mating season is still some months away.

If you want to hear what a strange sound it is, call 4620 3200.

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□ Robert Close
and Steven Ward

Shirley's a modern city koala

By STAVRO SOFIOS and
STEPHEN DOWNIE

SHE has cheated dog attacks, a bushfire — and even property developers.

Now Shirley the koala has become the symbol of her colony's ongoing resilience against the urban sprawl in Sydney's southwest.

The nine-year-old's bushland home south of Campbelltown is regarded as the only evidence scientists have of successful koala breeding in the greater Sydney area.

Up to 120 grey koalas live in the area from Minto Heights to Wedderburn Plateau, making it the most significant colony of the marsupials around Australia's largest city.

Just 60 koalas inhabited the same area four years ago.

A breeding program has become so successful the colony is set to double every four years.

University of Western Sydney koala expert Robert Close said yesterday the Campbelltown koalas were the best example of the species adapting to encroaching development.

The koalas have been surrounded by housing estates, forcing them to survive builders — and then children, domestic pets, cars and even a bushfire.

"The ones that are settled and know their area seem to be very resilient," Professor Close said.

"It seems to be that when they're on top of things they can cope with the surroundings, they can cope with the dogs and the trail bikers.

"Shirley's a lot tougher than we first realised. She's even survived an arson attack which burnt through most of her territory."

Shirley relaxes in a tree yesterday with her baby.

Picture: TRACEE LEA



Shirley and other members of the colony have been tracked over a 10ha zone by researchers, proving the koalas are moving between dedicated wildlife reserves — but also risking venturing too close to nearby human developments.

Professor Close said Shirley, who lives in bushland at Kentlyn, had already given birth to six koalas against the odds.

He said as long as partner Grant — or Grunt as he's been dubbed — survives, she will produce cubs every year.

The colony was discovered 13 years ago and is Sydney's most active.

It was under threat for years until the State Government stepped in and overturned plans by Campbelltown Council for a major residential development.

The \$30 million proposal would have seen an extra 150 houses built in the semi-rural spot, and sparked predictions of the colony's demise.

LINKS

www.koalapark.com

- Up to 120 koalas live in the Wedderburn colony. Four years ago, the area had a population of just 60 animals
- The colony was discovered 13 years ago
- Koala residents include Shirley and Grant and their offspring Frank, Dan, Stanley, Lyn (found in a primary school) and Georgia
- Other colonies near Sydney exist in the Blue Mountains and Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park
- Up to 100,000 koalas are believed to be left in the wild in Australia
- There are 600 varieties of eucalyptus that koalas eat. They consume up to a kilogram of eucalyptus leaves per night

Daily Telegraph 5th June 2001

See pic o'page



Recent koala sightings



ley's dern koala



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LINKS 
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School's in for koala

McAd 26/9/01
KENTLYN Public School has become the home of a koala after it arrived unannounced at the school during lunch on Friday.

Oblivious to the children's stares, the koala ambled into the school and made its way up a leafy tree.

Principal Bev Newett said it didn't take long for the word to get around.

"The children were really excited and told the teachers," Ms Newett said.

"All the children came out class by class."

The koala seemed unfazed by the human attention, walking over to an alternative tree while the students were on afternoon tea, eating some leaves and falling fast asleep, arms dangling over a limb, while the children played ball games below.

It stayed in the



UNFAZED... A koala claims a tree in Kentlyn Public School.
Photo: CHRIS LANE

school during a working bee on Saturday, and was still resting in a tree within the school grounds early this week.

"The koala was very amicable, seemed quite happy with hu-

man company and slept through a lot of noise," Ms Newett said.

The last koala in the school grounds was three years ago two appeared opposite the school at the end of last year.

Amazing koala shows how to survive fire

DT 2/1/02

By SIMON BENSON

BLACKENED and somewhat dazed, this koala has amazed scientists by surviving a fire that tore through Sydney's largest koala colony on Christmas Day and left the habitat little more than ash.

He was found yesterday taking refuge in the only unburnt tree for kilometres after a fire swept through Heathcote National Park and bushland at Wedderburn.

And he was not alone. Three koalas, including a female named Franceska and her son Victor, have also been found by University of Western Sydney researchers in patches of bush that managed to escape the blaze.

Fears that the entire Wedderburn koala colony near Campbelltown might have been destroyed were allayed when Dr Robert Close tracked down Franceska with a radio device first attached to her in 1995.

At least three koalas of the 15 to 20 member population managed to survive the first big fire in the area since 1991.

"I saw the firefront from my home and I thought 'they are in for it now'," said Dr Close, a University of Western Sydney biologist.



A koala found at Wedderburn

"Of our tagged animals, Victor was found bleating piteously by fireys.

"They cleared around his tree, watered the surrounds and burnt back into the approaching flames.

"Franceska was located by her radio-collar, 20m up a stringybark that had all its leaves killed by the heat."

The university is asking the public to report any koala sightings to the koala hotline on 02 9962 9996.

Macarthur Advertiser 26th September 2001

Shirley a mo city

By STAVRO SOFIOS and
STEPHEN DOWNIE

SHE has cheated dog attacks, a bush fire — and even property developers.

Now Shirley the koala has become the symbol of her colony's ongoing resilience against the urban sprawl in Sydney's southwest.

The nine-year-old's bushland home south of Campbelltown is regarded as the only evidence scientists have of a successful koala breeding in the greater Sydney area.

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"Shirley's a lot tougher than we first realised. She's even survived an arson attack which burnt through most of her territory."

Shirley relaxes in a tree yesterday with her baby.

Picture: TRACEE LEA

Recent koala sightings



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- The colony was discovered 13 years ago
- Koala residents include Shirley and Grant and their offspring Frank, Dan, Stanley, Lyn (found in a primary school) and Georgia
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Penrith City Star Tuesday 15/5/2001
General News Page 7
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On koalas' trail

By ANGELA CUMING

THE question of whether a colony of koalas is living on the ADI development site might soon be answered.

Leading koala expert, Dr Robert Close, has made a formal request to ComLand to survey the area.

ComLand is the federal body that owns the controversial ADI site.

The government wants to build a mini-city of 8000 homes on the wooded site between Mount Pleasant and St Marys, but Penrith council wants the development scaled back. Residents opposing it want the site declared a giant park.

Dr Close, a lecturer/researcher at the University of Western Sydney, has no links to any of the parties.

He is widely respected for his study of the koala colony at Wedderburn, near Campbelltown and he now wants to inspect the ADI land for koala droppings and tree scratch marks and to document sightings.

He said his request to survey the land was "driven by a need" to complete his study of koala colonies in west and south-western Sydney.

He said if any koalas were found he could determine whether they



KOALA MAN . . . Dr Close catching a koala at Wedderburn a decade ago for disease testing and fitting with an electronic tracker.

belonged to a local colony or were introduced. Last week, former site worker, Kevin Evans, said he had seen koalas there in the 1970s and 1980s.

Dr Close said if koalas were once on the site there was a strong possibility they could still be there, simply living undetected.

School's in for koala

KENTLYN Public School has become the home of a koala after it arrived unannounced at the school during lunch on Friday.

Oblivious to the children's stares, the koala ambled into the school and made its way up a leafy tree.

Principal Bev Newett said it didn't take long for the word to get around.

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Photo: CHRIS LANE

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"The koala was very amicable, seemed quite happy with hu-

man company and slept through a lot of noise," Ms Newett said.

The last koala in the school grounds was three years ago two appeared opposite the school at the end of last year.



Size: 74.82 sq.cms.

ADI koala hunt

THE question of whether a colony of koalas is living on the ADI land might soon be answered.

Leading koala expert Dr Robert Close has made a formal request to ComLand – the federal body that owns the ADI site – to survey the area for the existence of the marsupials.

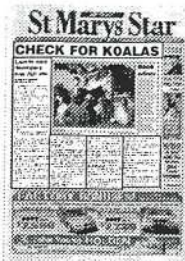
Dr Close, a lecturer and researcher from the University of Western Sydney, said he wanted to inspect the land for koala droppings and scratch marks on trees as well as sightings of the animals.

“All are accepted scientific procedures for spotting koalas,” he said.

Dr Close said his request to survey the land was “driven by a need” to complete his study of koala colonies in western and south western Sydney.

He said if any koalas were found it could be determined whether they belonged to a local colony or were introduced.

A spokesperson for ComLand said it was sceptical of the existence of koalas.



Mt Druit - St Marys Standard Tuesday 8/5/2001
General News Page 1
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CHECK FOR KOALAS

Experts warn developers over ADI site

By **ANGELA CUMING**
and **JEFF MCGILL**

A COLONY of koalas might be living on the ADI land, according to a former worker on the site and a leading koala expert.

It is a suggestion that would have far-reaching implications for the government and the developers if it is proved correct.

The former defence industries site, consisting of sprawling open forest between Mount Pleasant and St Marys, is earmarked for a controversial new minicity of 8000 homes, with the support of the state and federal governments.

The site already has a significant number of kangaroos and emus, all of which are destined for extermination.

The existence of endangered koalas could be a vastly different matter.

Kevin Evans, of Shalvey, said last week he had seen koalas on the site when he worked there during the late 70s and early 80s.

Mr Evans drove a truck that carried explosives to different parts of

the site.

"It was common knowledge at the time that there were koalas on the site," Mr Evans said.

"Several of my mates also saw them in the trees at different times.

"There was even a rumour they had been brought onto the site to establish a new colony."

Mr Evans's claim has been backed up by Dr Robert Close, an expert on koalas.

Dr Close is a lecturer and researcher at the University of Western Sydney Macarthur who has devoted the past 10 years to the study of koalas. He said there was a "very real possibility" about the story told by Mr Evans.

Dr Close is something of a hero in the Campbelltown area, where his studies helped protect the koala colony at Wedderburn and Kentlyn.

"The ADI site is abundant with forest redgums, which is prime koala food," he said, "and the site has been relatively untouched for a long time."

If the koalas were once on the site, which he "had no reason to disbelieve", there is a very strong possibility the koalas are still there, simply living undetected.

Dr Close said there was no record of a koala colony near Campbelltown before the 1990s.

This was despite a flora and fauna survey of the area in 1976 which failed to mention their existence.

"My point is they were always there but people did not see them because they were not looking for them, and that is possibly the same for the koalas on the ADI site," Dr Close said.

"If there are koalas on the ADI site and if the development goes ahead, the results would be disastrous."

■ **DEVELOPERS** moved in with bulldozers in 1988 to create a small prestige estate amid the leafy forests of Wedderburn, south of Campbelltown.

Like Penrith's much larger ADI site, the development had been approved by authorities.

But, as the bulldozers were about to move in, it was revealed that koalas were on the site.

This came as a shock because official flora and fauna studies had found nothing.

But it was proved there were previously undetected koalas living on the site.

By 1993, it was proved that the colony was expanding along the Georges River to within kilometres of Campbelltown.

The Labor Party vowed to save the site if elected.

This prompted the Liberal government to get in first and resume the site and declare it a koala reserve.

The battle was won.



KOALAS FEARED UNDER THREAT

By ANGELA CUMING
and JEFF MCGILL

A COLONY of koalas might be living on the ADI land, a former site worker and a leading koala expert claim.

It would have far-reaching implications for the government and developers if the claim is proved.

The former defence industries site - consisting of sprawling open forest between Mount Pleasant and St Marys - is earmarked for a controversial new mini-city of 8000 homes, with the support of the state and federal governments.

The site already has significant numbers of kangaroos and emus - all destined for inevitable extermination - but the existence of endangered koalas could be a vastly different matter.

Kevin Evans last week told the *Penrith Star* he had seen koalas on the site when he worked there during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The Shalvey resident drove a truck that carried explosives to different parts of the site.

Mr Evans said in the early 1980s he saw a female koala with a baby on its back, sitting in a tree.

"I just looked up and saw them

Explosive new evidence

there," he said. "It was common knowledge at the time that there were koalas on the site.

"Several of my mates also saw them in the trees at different times.

"There was even a rumour they had been brought onto the site to establish a new colony."

Mr Evans' claim has been backed up by Dr Robert Close, a leading expert on the marsupial.

Mr Close, a lecturer and researcher from the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur, has devoted the past 10 years to the study of koalas and their habitats and said there was a "very real possibility" of proving Mr Evans' story.

Dr Close is something of a modest folk hero in the Campbelltown area, where his studies have helped protect the famous koala colony at Wedderburn and Kentlyn (once profiled by the influential National Geographic magazine).

Turn to page 2



Penrith City Star Tuesday 8/5/2001
General News Page 1
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Size: 406.06 sq.cms.



Site full of koala food

From Page 1

"The ADI site is abundant with forest red-gums, which is prime koala food, and the site has been relatively untouched for a long time," Dr Close said.

If the koalas were once on the site, which he "had no reason to

disbelieve", there is a strong possibility they are still there, simply living undetected.

He pointed out prior to the 1990s it was not well known a koala colony was present near Campbelltown.

"There was no record of them even existing," Dr Close

said. This was despite a flora and fauna survey in 1976 which failed to mention their existence.

"My point is they were always there but people did not see them because they were not looking for them, and that is possibly the same for the

koalas on the ADI site," he said.

Dr Close said koalas were once common in the Blue Mountains but their numbers had steadily decreased.

"If there are koalas on the ADI site and if the development goes ahead, the results would be disastrous."

Barely alive: 4000 killed each year

MORE than 4000 koalas are killed every year due to habitat destruction, dogs and road kill. The Australian koala foundation says the animals' habitat is limited to a few areas in southern and eastern Australia.

Continual loss of habitat (as a result of human settlement and extended road building) has reduced the population from over three million to under 100,000.

Other killers are chlamydia and bushfires.



WELL HIDDEN . . . One of the Wedderburn koalas not detected in early studies

Your doggie can get you in strife

13/12/00 mca

If you are a dog owner, the law now imposes some very strict obligations upon you.

Under the Companion Animal Act of 1988, an owner of a dog is liable, if the dog rushes at, attacks, bites, harasses, or chases any person or animal (other than vermin), whether or not an injury is caused.

Mrs Elyse White, a personal injury specialist at Marsdens believes that a dog out of its yard must always be under control.

"If your dog is on a public street it must be under effective control by a competent person - you.

"Even if they are under effective control, they are prohibited from such areas as schools or children's play areas," Mrs White said.

With dog attacks on the increase, owners should be aware of the law.

dog does cause harm," Mrs White said. Providing you are a responsible dog owner and keep your dog under effective control at all times, then you have nothing to fear, but do check with your insurance broker to make sure that you are covered in the event that something does go wrong. Contact Elyse White, Accredited Personal Injury Specialist on 4626 5077 for further information.

if your dog even rushes at another animal, you could find yourself in court, facing a civil claim.

The law is getting tough and increasing the responsibility of dog owners to ensure that their animals are kept under effective control at all times.

"I would recommend that all dog owners check their insurance policies to make sure that they are covered in the event that their

Macarthur Advertiser 13th December 2000.

Macarthur Chronicle 12th December 2000.

23/11/2000 *Chap*

Agents for new estate

LEUMEAH United Realty has been appointed the project manager for the new Heritage Heights Estate, off Kellerman Dr, at Denfield Estate, St Helen's Park.

Developer The Mir Group has created large blocks, some up to 869sq m, in what has been described as a "tranquil and serene setting", enhanced by the surrounding bush reserves. All blocks are level and considered prime building sites.

There are 10 Masterton Homes now under construction, available for purchase through Leumeah United Realty.

Another 30 home and land packages are also available. Details: Leumeah United Realty on 4626 5600.



Sam Mir, of the Mir Group, and Leumeah United Realty director Emmanuel Bekiaris at Heritage Heights estate

Macarthur Chronicle 28th November 2000.

Know your local creek

NARELLAN residents can find out which local creek they live near with the publication of a free catchment poster.

It aims to raise awareness of creek names and show Narellan residents how their local creek is connected to the Nepean River. Graphic designer Mark Shaw said the challenge was to create a poster that was fun and informative.

"We've tried to capture the essence of Narellan, its different land uses, landscapes and impacts on water quality," Mark said.

The posters were developed by the Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Management Trust and are free to all local homeowners, libraries, schools and community groups.

For copies of the poster, contact the Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Management Trust on 4722 2555.

Macarthur Chronicle 19th December 2000

Plans to clean up closed mine

CHRON 12-12-2000

STATE Mineral Resources Minister Eddie Obeid is calling for tenders to clean up Oakdale Colliery.

The colliery was closed down by creditors in May last year.

"The company did not fulfil its responsibility to clean up the Oakdale site," Mr Obeid told State Parliament last week.

"Without proper rehabilitation it would have posed a potential threat to the environment and the community," he said.

"The Government has been determined to safeguard the environment."

Mr Obeid said the mine had been

fenced and a security firm monitored the site.

"A clean up has been organised to remove oil and grease left on the site which could have been washed into local waterways," he said.

The State Government has used the money lodged by the former owners of the mine to fund the work.

"I am pleased to announce that this security will be supplemented with a further \$50,000 from the Government's Derelict Mines Rehabilitation program," Mr Obeid said.

"The Government is committed to ensuring that our mines are fully rehabilitated and Oakdale is just one beneficiary."

Macarthur Chronicle 19th December 2000

Listing is great news

PARTS of Wollondilly shire are now protected after recent United Nations' World Heritage listing of the Blue Mountains included Thirlmere Lakes and the Nattai area.

"The decision by the United Nations World Heritage Commission to give the Blue Mountains area world heritage listing status is great news for all Australians and locally for Wollondilly."

Wollondilly Councillor Michael Banasik said.

"When you look at the world heritage list which includes Kakadu National Park, The Great Barrier Reef and the Grand Canyon it really shows the significance of this recognition."

United Nations' World Heritage Committee chose the more than one million hectares of the Blue Mountains area for listing because of the site's wide variety of eucalypt trees and the famous Wollemi Pine.

Outrage over koala shooting

By KAREN SMITH

LOCAL koala researcher Robert Close was appalled to discover a koala nursing an air rifle wound recently.

He now fears the koala may die as a result of the callous attack.

"We received a call last Sunday week to say the koala had crossed Georges River Road and looked groggy, as though hit by a car," Mr Close said.

"We were soon at the site and found the koala in a small tree not far from the road.

"His eartags identified him as Gary, a koala whom we had captured near Kentilyn Primary School in April 1995."

Mr Close said the air gun pellet had hit him in the bottom and was lodged in the muscles beside his hip.

"The wound was infected and appears to

Macarthur Advertiser 20th December 2000



CALLOUS ACT... Gary the koala may die from the wound he suffered.

be about two weeks old," Mr Close said.

"This means that the animal must have been suffering for some time."

Mr Close took Gary to a veterinary hospital where he was treated with antibiotics to kill the infection.

On Monday Gary had been there for more than a week, and was not improving.

"He's on the ground

a lot, which is what koalas do when they are not well," Mr Close said.

He said he had never heard of a koala being shot before.

"If we're going to encourage koalas in the suburbs we have to get rid of this habit," Mr Close said.

"If anyone living in the Kentilyn area is aware of children with access to such a

weapon, we would like them to contact us as soon as possible.

"We know quite a lot about this animal's history and it is utterly depressing to find that although he has survived the cars, dogs and the fires of Kentilyn for probably the past nine years, one ignorant person with an air rifle can defeat him."

Contact Robert Close on 9962 9996.



Catchment carers... Eva Campbell (from left) congratulates award winners Jean Viccars and Kate Andrews (right), of Currans Hill Environment Group, and Narellian Community Care's Kathy Herron

Stiff penalty for illegal dumping

Karen Clarke

by SIMONE RICHARDS

A MENANGLE man was fined \$25,000 in the Land and Environment Court for deliberately dumping rubbish near the national park at Helensburgh, State Parliament heard last week.

Environment Minister Bob Debus said the man illegally dumped construction waste after being paid to lawfully dispose of it for a local business.

"Instead of spending just \$700 to dispose of the waste properly, he bypassed the local tip, drove past two 'no dumping' signs and dumped nine truck loads of construction rubbish in the bush," he said.

"National Parks and Wildlife Service officers alerted the EPA and covert surveillance was conducted on the site with the consequence that the offender was brought before the court."

new anti-litter laws were introduced by the State Government in July.

"These councils have caught nearly 1485 litter bugs and have issued 729 litter fines and 756 litter warnings since the new laws started on July 1," he told State Parliament on Wednesday.

"Many councils are issuing the new \$60 fines for littering with small items or the \$200 fines for littering from vehicles. Most councils have had a warning system or amnesty period in place before issuing fines."

Mr Debus said money from the fines and infringement notices would be used to fund programs to help the EPA and local councils to "keep up the fight

Eric not bearing up well in hunt for love

By JENNY STOKES

A YOUNG koala is desperately seeking a mate near backyards in Sutherland Shire.

Lonely Eric was spotted resting in a tree 20 metres from houses in Cranberry Street, Loftus on Tuesday morning, much to the consternation of birds put out by the interloper.

It's the third sighting of the male marsupial since he was captured and tagged near Prince Edward Park Road, Woronora, in December 1998.

Steven Ward, a koala researcher from the University of Western Sydney said it was likely Eric had roamed the Shire's south-west, near Yarrawarrah and Woronora, for 18 months looking for a willing female.

No-one knows if young Eric has been lucky or not.

But Mr Ward said a postal survey of the area in recent months turned up a surprising number of female koalas and babies scattered in isolated patches throughout the Shire – a find he claims could overturn established thoughts on the species.

Usually female koalas are quite sedentary and don't travel far from their population base, setting up home territories next to each other.

It's the males who do all the work, roaming up to 30

■ A postal survey in recent months has turned up a surprising number of female koalas and babies scattered in isolated patches throughout the Shire.

kilometres as part of the dating game. Even then they must fight other males for supremacy and risk attacks from domestic pets or dying for love on roads.

From more than 2600 survey forms sent to Sutherland Shire residents, 150 koala sightings were reported, many of them in Royal National Park and near Darkes Forest.

"The number of scattered females with young was somewhat unexpected," Mr Ward said.

"It looks like things could be happening differently here, it seems there are a number of young females doing their own thing."

Radio monitoring has shown daughters encroaching on their

own mum's territory – either forcing the parent out or shrinking her home turf.

Mr Ward said urbanisation could have caused the females to scatter.

Sutherland Shire's sandstone-based soil could also be the cause. The soil's low nutrient load provides less nourishment to the leaves koalas feed off than more lush areas such as Port Macquarie and may have changed traditional density patterns of the species.

"If that is the case it's quite exciting because it is something new but it is impossible to say whether there is a breeding population in the area or not because gaps such as the Holsworthy army base mean we

are not quite sure what is happening," Mr Ward said.

"It could be possible there is a breeding group at Darkes Forest and there was almost certainly one near Woronora, around The Needles, in the past but we don't know yet if it's still there."

Mr Ward said the research team was still interested in Shir koala sightings to provide them with as much information as possible and "fill in the gaps". People should also record tag colours and the ear they are on. The hotline number is 9962 9996.

UWS has also just released a 20 minute video of koalas in Sydney's south and Sutherland Shire, compiled from three years of filming.



LOOKING FOR LOVE ... Eric cuddles up to a tree at Loftus.

Eric's been anything but idle

LAST week we talked about Hugh, an old male kicked out of his territory by a younger, stronger male.

This week, we give the other side of the story - that of a young male, Eric, on his way up.

We have vivid memories of the day we first captured this feisty young bloke in 1998.

For a start, it was our first call to suburban Woronora.

Secondly, Eric was so high up a huge tree that we needed both of our 10m wire ladders tied end on end to get near him.

Lastly, he put up a

hoped for the best.

We supposed that he would keep moving until he found an area occupied by female koalas and their protective male.

Before he could settle in, however, he would have to kick out the resident male.

At 7.6kg, he would be too light and so would have to bide his time till he bulked up to more than 10kg.

Six months ago, we were notified that Eric was at Fahy Creek, near the railway line just west of the Pacific Highway between Yarrawarra and Loftus, and hoped he

wouldn't try to cross the Highway to the Royal National Park.

Apparently, he didn't, because two callers rang recently to say that Eric was in Cranberry Street, Loftus.

That means he's moved more than 3.5km since his first release, and we bet he's had some wild adventures since then.

Both callers said he looked huge.

So maybe Eric is ready to make a territorial challenge.

The trouble is that we don't know whether there are female koalas anywhere near Loftus.

With luck, however, Eric will find them if they're there.

We're sure we'll hear more of Eric's travels.

To report a koala sighting, call the University of Western Sydney hotline on 9962 9996.

To hear a koala bellowing, call 4620 3200.

Copies of our koala video can be obtained from *The Macarthur Advertiser* office, or from Quondong Visitor Centre or by sending \$25 to us at the University.

■ By Steven Ward and Robert Close.

Mac's Koala Club

tremendous fight before we could bag him and even then, he succeeded in biting Steven through the bag.

At that stage, Eric weighed 7.6kg and would have been roaming about trying to find suitable territory.

So we released him about 700m from houses in a nearby park and

19 AD
19-7-2000

Development site under siege

Macarthur Advertiser 19th July 2000.



PROTECTION ... Six-year-old Hayley Recchi and friends look for koalas on the St Helens Park site.

By KAREN SMITH

Koalas in line of fire

A CAMPBELLTOWN Councillor has called for an urgent meeting with Landcom to review a proposed development at St Helens Park.

This was one of three motions put forward by Councillor Sue Dobson at the last council meeting.

The others were to refer the matter to the council's Heritage Protection Sub-Committee and that council's director of planning and development must complete a report to inform council of all the issues.

The move comes after council received 246 signatures from residents opposing the development on Kellerman Drive.

The residents, several councillors and local academics are concerned that the development will have an adverse affect on the koala population and threatened species in the area.

Landcom is now revising a Species Impact Statement to resubmit it to the council.

The subdivision application is also subject to an appeal in the Land and Environment Court.

Cr Dobson said she is concerned about the ecological impact a development would have on the area.

"I am concerned about the impact the development will have on the local koala colony," Cr Dobson said. "I'm also concerned about the 30 hectares of Shale Sandstone Transitional Forest on the 40 hectare site.

"The sandstone is a rare and endangered species which will be threatened by further clearing and fragmentation of the area," she said.

Judi Nand has lived in the area for 10 years and is opposed to the development.

"My main concern is they found evidence of koalas up there and I think it's a resource worth protecting," Ms Nand said.

"And Appin Road is bad enough as it is and another 200 homes will create more problems," she said.

She said she had been out koala tracking with koala ac-

ademic Robert Close and found evidence of koalas.

"We found scratch marks on a tree and koala droppings," Ms Nand said. "There is a wallaby there just about every day."

Cr Dobson said council needs to look at reports before making a decision on the development.

"Council has a responsibility under the threatened species legislation to look very carefully at this site," Cr Dobson said.

She said the area was put on the Urban Development Plan more than 20 years ago, but governments and the public have become more environmentally aware since then.

"What might have been deemed appropriate 20 or 30 years ago may not be now," Cr Dobson said. "I'll do the best I can to work with councillors and residents to get the best outcome in there."

Support our koalas by writing to minister

AT the Campbelltown Council meeting on September 25, the proposed Landcom development for 192 residential blocks, eight roads and two public reserves at St Helen's Park was unanimously refused.

Council also referred the matter to Planning Minister Andrew Refshauge requesting that the refusal be supported.

The council is to be applauded for this decision, which was taken in recognition of the important ecological communities of Cumberland Plain woodland, the shale sandstone transitional forest and the threatened species of large land snail, all of which are present on the site.

The decision also recognises the importance of the land as both a food source and possible safe space for the local koala population and the need to consider the impacts of increasing access to bushland.

The final decision as to what will be the fate of this significant site rests with Andrew Refshauge.

All concerned residents need to write to him at Parliament House, Sydney, requesting him to support the decision of the local council.

10/10/2000
Coral Sewell
Macarthur Greens

Sydney Morning Herald

VANISHING KOALAS

The Australian Koala Foundation yesterday called for "a national koala act" to protect the marsupials after saying that koala numbers were declining alarmingly.

20th July 2000

The Chronicle 10th October 2000

Pollution fear after glass leak

THE age of a furnace at the Pilkington glass factory in Ingleburn has been blamed as a possible cause of a leak last week — and raised fears that it may have released extra gas pollutants.

Campbelltown councillor Jim Kremmer asked at a council committee meeting last Tuesday for a report into the incident.

He also asked if any environmental guidelines for the factory had been breached.

The Environment Protection Authority is also investigating the incident.

An EPA spokesman said the authority had asked Pilkington Glass for a full report on the furnace leak incident, and what the company did about it.

Mr Kremmer later said there were concerns that the furnace — installed when the factory was built in 1988 — was past its “use by date”.

“When it was installed, it was expected to have a life span of seven years,” he said.

“I’m concerned that if something goes wrong, are more of those pollutants spewed out into the air?”

Glass manufacturing

Macarthur Chronicle

4th July 2000

molten glass spilled from the tank, which holds a total of 1100 tonnes, he said. The glass collected in a special spill area, and there were no injuries, he said.

At the time of going to press yesterday, Mr Howard was unable to be contacted to confirm the level of NOx emissions from the leak, and if the level exceeded guidelines.

Australian Workers Union NSW sub-branch secretary John Gorrie said he believed when the Ingleburn site opened in 1988, that the furnace would last 10 years.

“Age has got a lot to do with it, that’s my opinion,” he said.

“The life expectancy of all furnaces is 10 years.”

Mr Howard said when the furnace was originally built, it had a life expectancy of 10 to 12 years without anything being done to it.

“But that doesn’t happen,” he said.

“We are always doing things to it and making new improvements.”

A Campbelltown Council report from a meeting last year said Pilkington proposed to reduce NOx emissions by 80 per cent by installing new technology in 2001.

Another council report tabled last year said Pilkington’s Ingleburn factory was the “single largest source of NOx in the Sydney basin contributing approximately 3 per cent of the overall emissions annually”.

produces oxides of nitrogen (NOx), which are also produced by motor vehicles and other industrial combustion processes.

While levels of most of Sydney’s main air pollutants have fallen in the past 20 years, NOx levels are still rising in the Campbelltown area.

Pilkington Glass human Resources vice-president Russell Howard said the leak was due to a hole which had developed in the furnace wall, which was not unusual.

About 80 tonnes of

by EMMA BLADEN

by EMMA BLADEN

beyond the company’s licensing requirements for opacity.

Pilkington Glass human resources vice-president Russell Howard said the opacity was smoke generated when the furnace leak damaged wiring which affected computer controls at the factory.

An EPA spokesman said the infringement notice was issued on July 12 and that generally Pilkington Glass was a good environmental performer.

Glass maker fined after furnace leak

PILKINGTON Glass in Ingleburn has been fined \$1500 by the Environment Protection Authority over a furnace leak on June 26.

The fine was for the level of “opacity” — or smoke — from the furnace leak, not for any oxides of nitrogen (NOx) released during the incident.

About 80 tonnes of molten glass spilled from an 1100-tonne tank at Pilkington Glass’s Ingleburn factory after a hole developed in the furnace wall.

The glass collected in a special spill area in the factory’s basement and no one was injured.

A staff report presented to Campbelltown Council’s health, environment, community and cultural services committee on Tuesday stated that after the molten glass spill there was a reduction in the amount of NOx produced compared to levels during the normal glass production process.

However in the days following the furnace leak Pilkington Glass “had a number of opacity emissions which exceeded guidelines”, the report said. The emissions were

Macarthur Advertiser 24th June 2000.

Bush protection

By AMANDA IRELAND

NATIVE bushland around Campbelltown has been included in a new conservation strategy planned by the Federal Government.

As part of the One Billion Trees program, a vegetation management project is being set up to protect biodiversity in Campbelltown.

Council has worked with the National Parks and Wildlife Service to prepare a vegetation map of the city which has almost been completed.

The mapping process has involved extensive field surveys, interpretation of aerial photographs and plant identification.

The aim was to also collect information on plant species, soil type and environmental disturbance, for

example erosion and weed growth.

Bob Webster, director of council’s health and environmental services, said: “The species found and the level of disturbance provides a way of determining the best management of the native vegetation.”

The plan provides areas for bush regeneration projects such as Noorumba Reserve at Rosemeadow and the Nepean River at Menangle Park.

Opportunities will be available for people to volunteer for bush regeneration activities like tree planting and weed control.

The public is invited to Riverfest on June 4 in Koshigaya Park to celebrate World Environment Day.

Navy Personnel and Training Centre – Canberra
Jan Finch



Dear Shiel
Here's the article I was
talking about !!

MailCall

Robert Close * wants help in a koala search



The University of Western Sydney needs community help to find koalas in the Blue Mountains. The area is too big and the koalas too hard to spot for small teams to be effective. The object is to locate a colony with a breeding female — there has not been a colony in this area since the 1960s.

There are signs to look for — the male's unusual call (listen on 02 4620 3200) and the olive-pip shaped pellets dropped beneath trees (130 a day). Observers of any of these signs should immediately notify National Parks or call our pager number (02 9962 9996) and provide the following information: date and time of sighting, exact

location, size of animal, whether it had a baby on its back or in its pouch, and whether it had ear-tags.

Identifying a female with young is vital because it will demonstrate that a breeding group exists. Recent sightings have been of two young males that might have moved in from far afield.

Checking for ear-tags is also important, as these two mates have individually coloured tags that will allow us to track them through the mountains and, hopefully, lead us to a breeding colony.

* Robert Close is a professor of biology at the University of Western Sydney

Friday, June 16, 2000—26
Daily Telegraph
Canberra

Daily Telegraph

The following article appeared on p.15 of the Daily Telegraph , 7/6/2000

Daily Telegraph 7/6/2000

Hopes climb for lost koala colony

By LETTIA ROWLANDS

WILDLIFE experts are appealing to the public for help in finding a koala colony thought to have vanished more than 30 years ago.

The University of Western Sydney and National Parks and Wildlife Service have launched a study in the lower Blue Mountains following the capture and release of two koalas in the area recently.

Clancy, captured at Lapstone in 1998, and Norman, captured in Springwood in 1999, were the first koalas found in the area since 1968.

Researchers are now keen to locate more koalas to confirm the existence of a breeding female and therefore guarantee the future of the colony.

Last month Robert Clouse, from UWS, and other researchers took their findings to shopping centres in Penrith and Richmond to raise awareness of the study.

Prof Clouse said many local residents did not realise the importance of reporting koala sightings.

"Locals in the area could be our greatest source of information but sometimes do not realise just what we want to know," he said.

"When we went to the shopping centres with a stuffed koala to get people's attention, all of a sudden they started telling us about sightings and providing other details."

Prof Clouse said locals did not have to actually sight a koala to be able to provide useful information.

Koalas also left characteristic scratches on the bark of eucalypt trees and male koalas had a distinctive pig-like bellow.

"Anything that will help us track where they are at any given time will help us identify their habitat and assist with the study," he said.

Prof Clouse said there would be further community involvement in the search for the koalas.

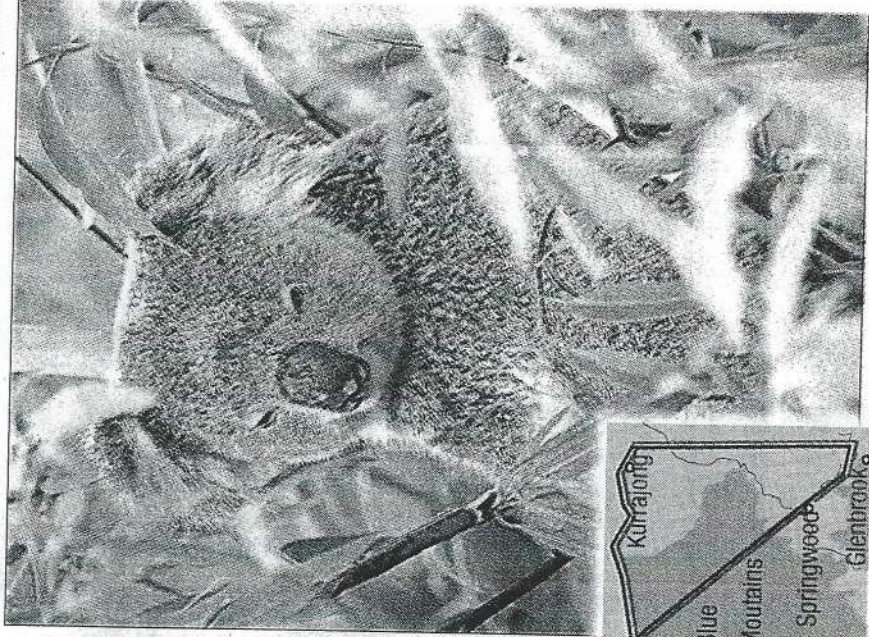
Plans included handing out brochures containing details of the project to people entering the Blue Mountains National Park and the establishment of a Friends of the Koala community group.

Prof Clouse will also approach schools in the hope that studies of the koala can be included in science curriculums.

"It's basically a matter of reminding people and maintaining an interest in the koala colony," he said.

Prof Clouse said anyone wanting to provide information on koalas in the area could call researchers on (02) 9962 9996.

Anyone who believes they have heard a koala's bellow can call (02) 4620 3200 to hear a recording of the noise and help them identify it.



Clancy, who was captured in 1998 and (inset) the area of the lower Blue Mountains where koalas have been sighted.