

# SYDNEY BASIN KOALA NETWORK

## KOALAS IN THE HAWKESBURY

### Dharug and Darkinung Lands



Fact sheet based on SBKN, Biolink, EDO and TEC reports [2023](#), [2024](#) and [2025](#).

### Koalas in Hawkesbury

The Hawkesbury LGA is dominated by native vegetation and areas of National Park. **Over half (57.1%) of the vegetation in the Hawkesbury is preferred koala habitat - that's 158,435 ha<sup>1</sup>.**

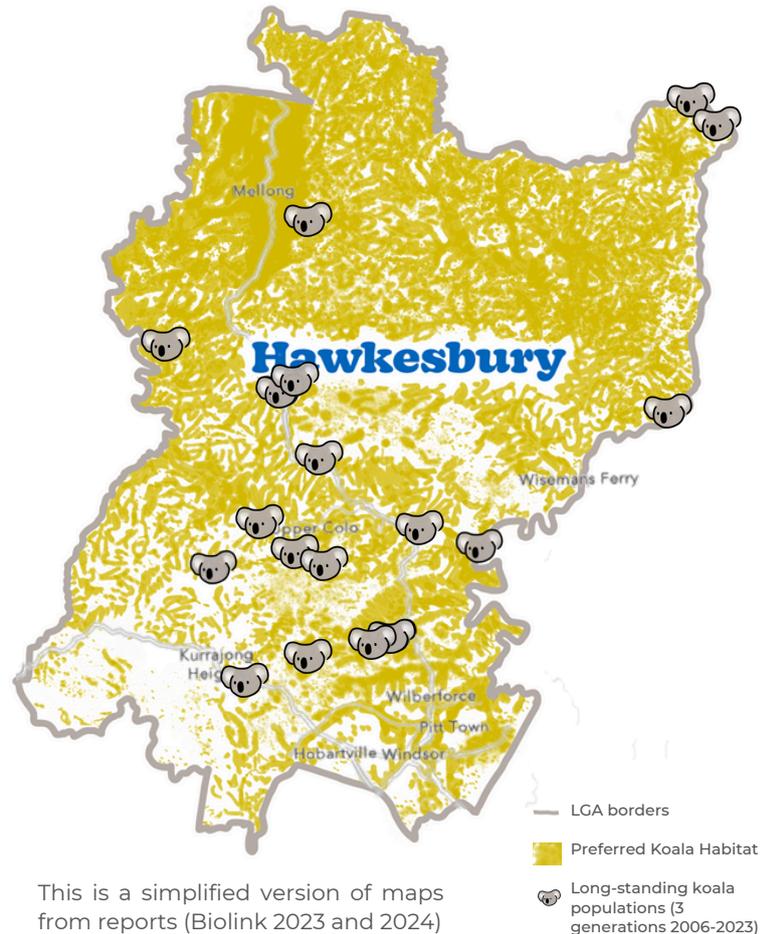
The Hawkesbury koala population is thought to be around 2000 koalas and is the most genetically diverse population in Australia<sup>2</sup>, meaning they are very important! Analysis of historical koala records shows **long-standing resident koala populations scattered across the Hawkesbury LGA** - illustrated on the map opposite.



2024 - Kurrajong, Hawkesbury by Eric Finley

In our most recent progress report<sup>3</sup>, analysis by Biolink found the geographic range and areas of koala persistence have remained relatively stable between 2021 and 2023 with slight increase in the area occupied by koalas across the LGA. This suggests the **Koala population is currently stable in Hawkesbury**, However with less than one koala generation (6 years) since the black summer fires, which burnt over three quarters (78.7%) of the koala habitat in the Hawkesbury<sup>1</sup>, it is likely we are not seeing the full extent of the effects yet and Hawkesbury koalas face multiple threats.

### Map of Koala Habitat and Long Standing Koala Populations in the Hawkesbury



### Local Advocacy

Thank you to local collaborators for their advocacy:

- [Hawkesbury Environment Network](#)
- [Blue Mountains Conservation Society](#)
- [Valley for Wildlife, MacDonald Valley Association](#)
- [Hills-Hornsby Rural Koala Project](#)
- [Lithgow Environment Group](#)
- [Science for Wildlife](#)
- [Mountains for Wildlife, Hawkesbury](#)

If your group would like to join the Network or you have a concern about koalas in the Sydney Basin, please contact us:

[info@sydneybasinkoalanetwork.org.au](mailto:info@sydneybasinkoalanetwork.org.au)



2023 - Kurrajong, Citizen Science Training Day

## Threats to Koalas

The current stability of the Hawkesbury Koala population is foreshadowed by **lack of protection on private land, continued indiscriminate clearing under the LLS Code and RBCC (see case study), cumulative impacts of development and loss to vehicle strikes.** Their future is uncertain.

Sightings by the community on the peri-urban edges of around Bilpin, Kurrajong, Wildberforce, St Albans, Blaxland's Ridge, and Glossodia have been steadily increasing since Black Summer. However, the community has also reported several koala vehicle strikes on Bells Line of Road recently. Putty Road and Bells Line of Road road have the highest number of recorded vehicle strikes in Hawkesbury and vehicle strike is persistent and on-going on both roads<sup>4</sup>. **Lack of habitat protection and continued pressure of habitat loss and vehicle strike could push them into decline<sup>5</sup> unless urgent action is taken.**

### Case Study: Rural Boundary Clearing Code puts Hawkesbury's koalas at risk

The Rural Boundary Clearing Code (RBCC)<sup>6</sup>, was introduced by the NSW Government following the Black Summer bushfires, permitting rural landholders to clear 25m of bushland along their property borders. The RBCC was not recommended in the bushfire inquiry<sup>7</sup>, with no evidence it reduces fire risk, but does have a significant impact on biodiversity. The clearing of koala habitat by the RBCC is only prevented in LGAs with a Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (CKPoM) in place. Hawkesbury does not yet have a CKPoM in place, leaving Koala habitat vulnerable.

Hawkesbury Council is the only peri-urban council to 'opt-in' to the RBCC and the community has since raised concerns of its misuse for urban planning and fragmentation of core koala habitat. In May 2023, a motion by Hawkesbury Councillors to opt-out of the RBCC was narrowly defeated. After community outrage, Hawkesbury Council committed to undertake Koala Habitat mapping, and have since committed to implementing a CKPoM. In the meantime, habitat loss via the RBCC continues.

This case underscores the risks posed to koalas due to voluntary mapping and implementation of CKPoMs by councils and the time this can take. Immediate action is necessary at a State level, including scrapping the RBCC and funding all councils with koalas to rapidly implement CKPoMs.



2023 - Kurrajong, Citizen Science Training Day

## Koalas Need Connected Habitat

Connected habitat allows koalas to move across the landscape. This is crucial for many reasons; to find new mates, to access resources and to move when needed due to fire or climate change. The extent of fire here illustrates the importance of protecting unoccupied habitat for koalas to move into. **Habitat loss and fragmentation pose the greatest threat to koala survival and will continue unless habitat is properly mapped, and protected, with connectivity made a priority.**

The move toward implementing a Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (CKPoM) will help safeguard habitat connectivity at the landscape level, essential for koalas to recover and get off the endangered list.

## Hawkesbury CKPoM Underway

In November 2024 **Hawkesbury Council** **unanimously voted to fund a Koala Plan of Management in full**, including corridor mapping. A huge win for the community and Hawkesbury's Koalas. It's the result of years of advocacy and pressure from network members Hawkesbury Environment Network HEN, Mountains for Wildlife, Hawkesbury - Blue Mountains, MacDonald Valley Association and WIRES with our support.



SBKN with the Hawkesbury Environment Network and Mountains for Wildlife at the Kurrajong Wellness Festival 2024



2023 - Kurrajong, Citizen Science Training Day

**Koalas are classified as endangered in NSW. Our reports do not indicate that the situation will change and is indeed likely to get worse unless serious action is taken.**

**Read the full reports here**



## Legal Reform Needed

Legislation and policy has continued to allow the decline of koalas, but there is an opportunity for local state and federal governments to create immediate impact<sup>8</sup> and halt the decline of koala populations.

**Local Level:** Finalise Hawkesbury's Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (CKPoM) including corridor mapping.

**Local Level:** Reverse the decision to 'opt-in' to the Rural Boundary Clearing Code.

**State Level:** Ensure laws apply to all koala habitat by adopting consistent, comprehensive mapping across NSW as a matter of urgency, to identify key areas for conservation.

**State Level:** Reform state laws to deliver certain protection and strong safeguards for koalas in all environmental, planning and land clearing legislation.

**State Level:** Scrap the Rural Boundary Clearing Code

**Federal Level:** Urgently reform the EPBC Act to strengthen laws to protect Koalas.

## Community action for a positive future

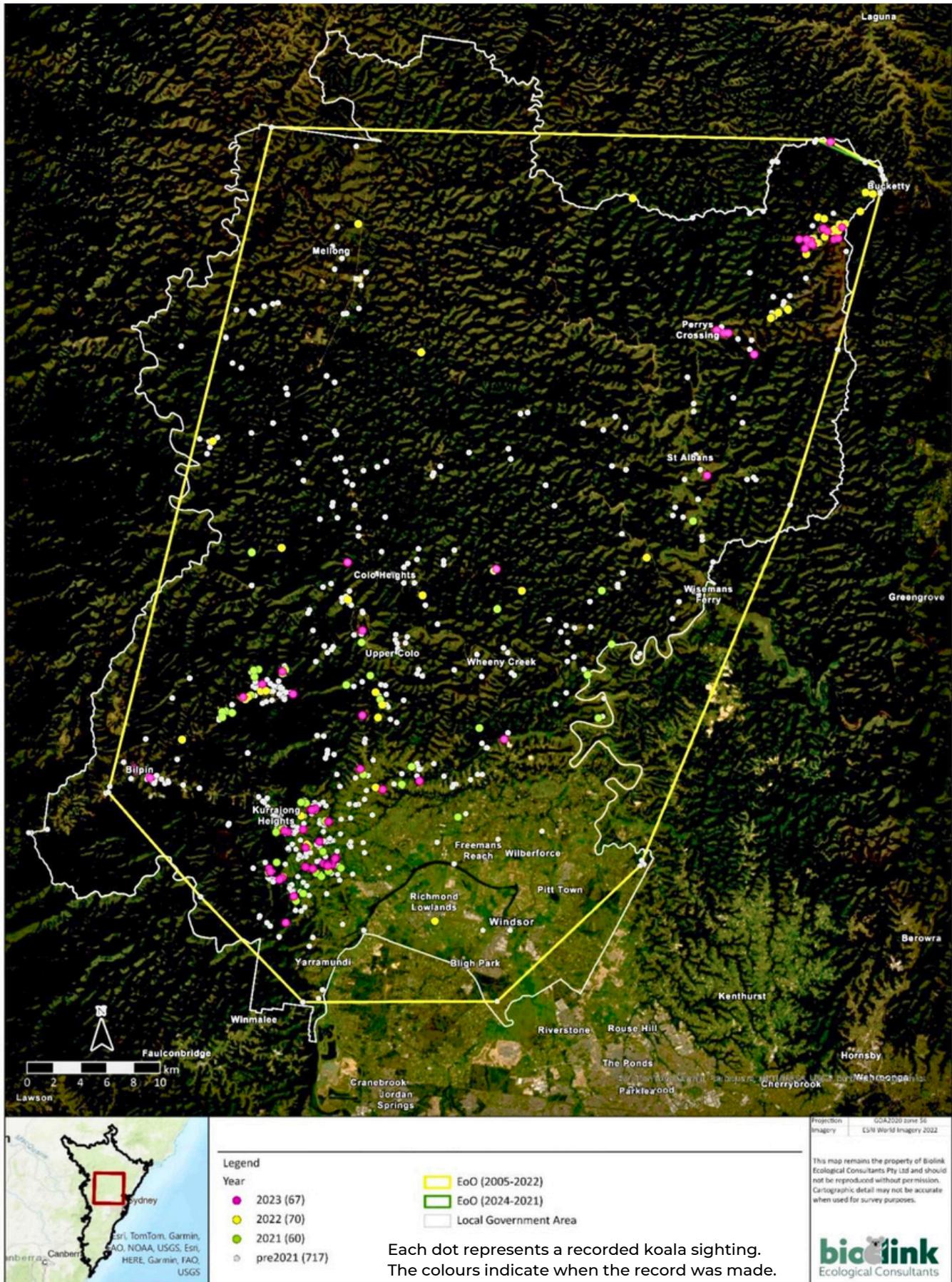
The large amount of koala habitat in the Hawkesbury combined with the broad range of sightings and diversity of this population indicate that **Hawkesbury's koalas could expand and grow if priority was given to addressing the many threats they are facing.**

We can already see, from the commitment to fund a CKPoM, that community pressure can result in positive change!

You can **get involved in helping koalas by joining a local community group, advocating to government and reporting koalas (including roadkill)** that you see on I Spy Koala app.

**If you see injured or sick wildlife please call Hunter Wildlife Rescue 0418 628 483 or WIRES 1300 094 737**

# Distribution of Koalas in Hawkesbury



## References

- <sup>1</sup> Biolink, 2023: [Sydney Basin Bioregion: Koala habitat and population assessment](#)
- <sup>2</sup> Kjeldsen, S.R. et al., 2019. [Genomic comparisons reveal biogeographic and anthropogenic impacts in the koala](#)
- <sup>3</sup> SBKN, EDO, Biolink and TEC, 2024: [State of Koalas in the Sydney Basin. First Annual Assessment](#)
- <sup>4</sup> Biolink, 2025: [Vehicle Strike and Koala Populations in the Sydney Basin Bioregion](#)
- <sup>5</sup> Biolink, 2007 [Conserving koalas in the Coomera-Pimpama Koala Habitat Area –a view to the future.](#)
- <sup>6</sup> [Rural Boundary Clearing Code for NSW](#), 26 August 2021
- <sup>7</sup> [Final Report of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry](#), 31 July 2020
- <sup>18</sup> SBKN, EDO, Biolink and TEC, 2025: [State of Koalas in the Sydney Basin. Second Annual Assessment](#)