

Figure 3: The Plain Area showing four nominated areas for future urban growth and major infrastructure corridors

Protecting the Cumberland Plain woodlands

Description

Update: 9th October 2020. I have made a submission to the State Government on the Conservation Plan. [Read it here.](#)

This week the State Government placed the [Draft Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan](#) on exhibition for comment.

This is a significant document for a number of reasons, although it has some failings which my submission to the Minister will seek to remedy.

The [Cumberland Plain](#) is a generic term for the (mostly) flat geographical area laying between eastern Sydney and the Blue Mountains, encompassing Western Sydney from the south near Wilton to the north including the Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain. The forests and grasslands it used to host have been significantly fragmented by urban development, and previous attempts to create woodland corridors or “green lungs” for Sydney have been eroded over the decades, which I’ve [written about before](#), and [explained in a video](#).

The first thing to observe is updated maps relating to the location and extent of the M9/OSO road and infrastructure corridor are a part of the plan, and now formally exclude areas north of Richmond Road. This is heartening, but our community will not have certainty until the final extents are gazetted, which is in my opinion, [significantly overdue](#).

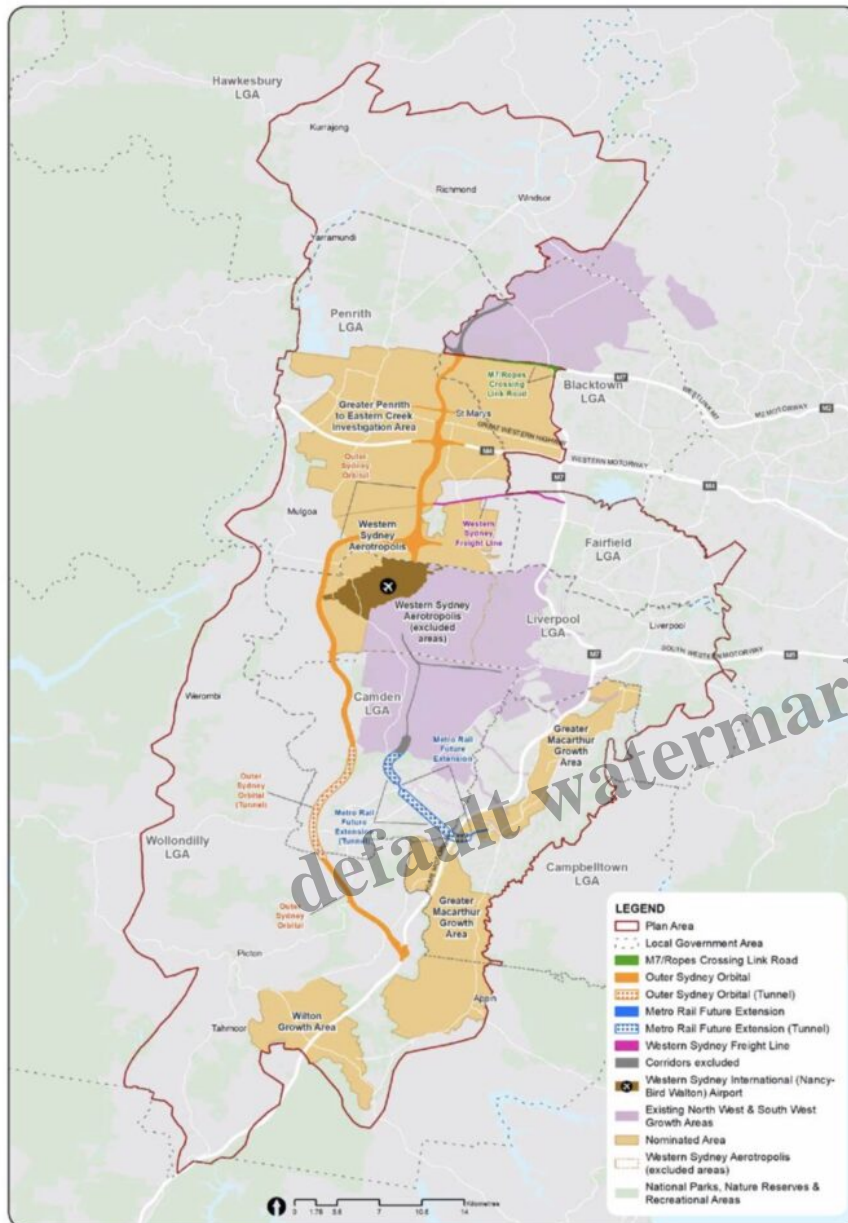
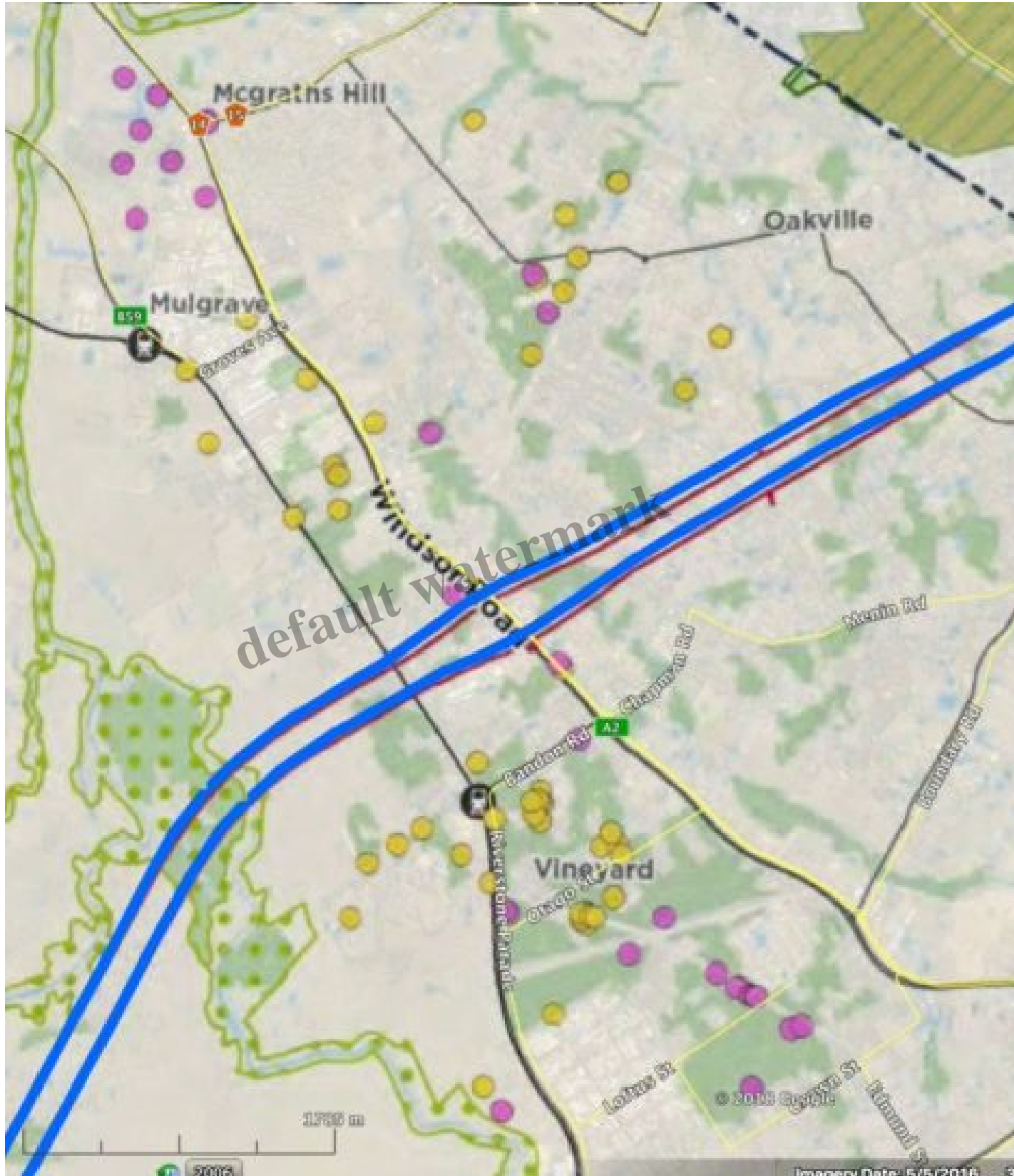


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While we're on the subject of corridors, the [Draft EIS](#) offered alongside the RMS proposal for the M9 included maps which purported to show the extent of Cumberland Plain Vegetation (of various types) along its path.

However, these maps were greatly at variance with other maps, such as NPWS maps, which showed significantly greater coverage.

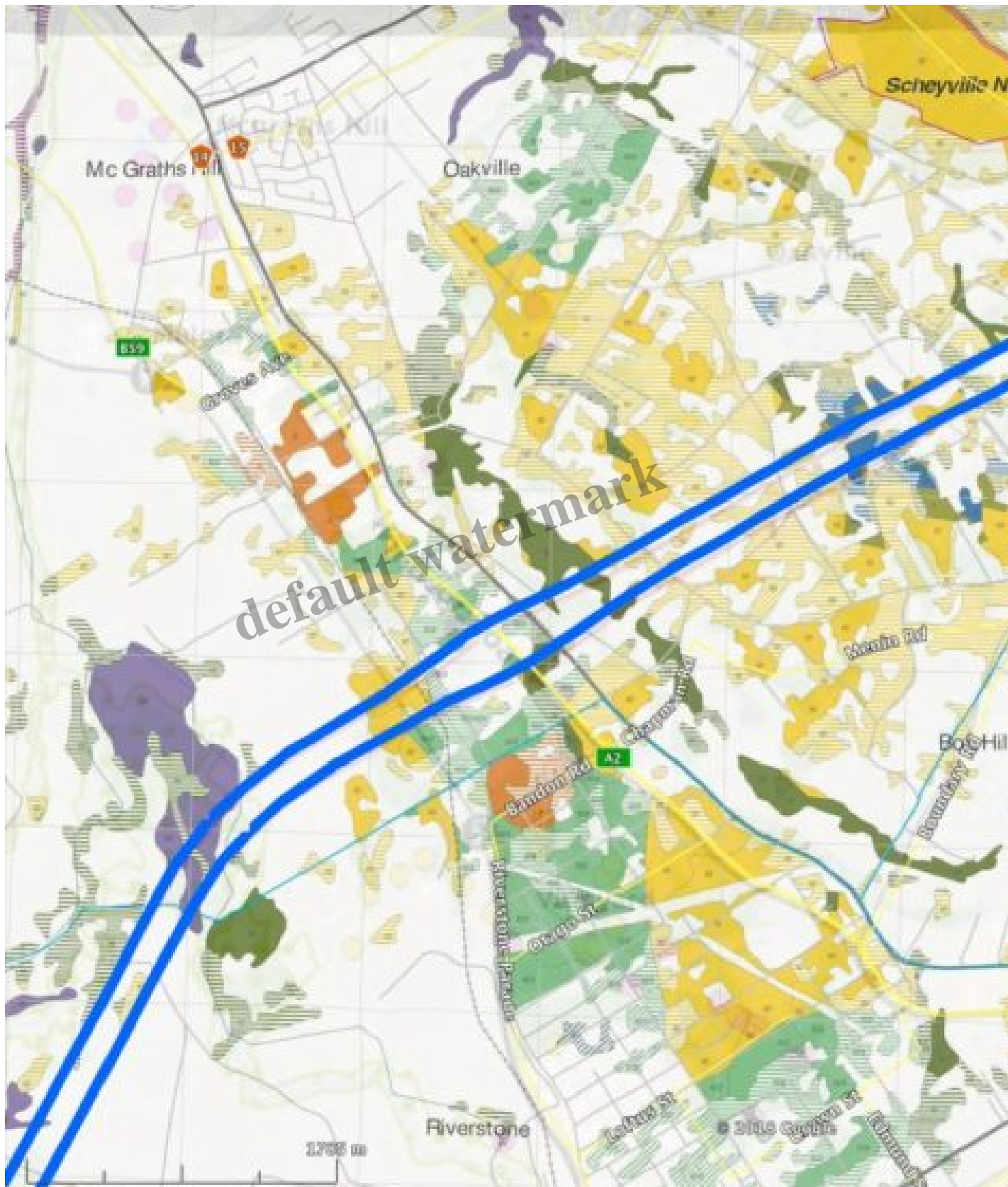
I pointed this out at the time, both in [an article](#) and [a video](#) showing exactly how the extent of Cumberland woodland has been underestimated. I also created a [Google Earth Overlay](#) comparing the two.



The northern extent of the proposed M9 corridor (as at 2018, not now) downplaying the extent of woodland in the vegetation study created by Transport for NSW.

The green areas above represent “Threatened ecological communities” and the hatched areas

represent "Cumberland Plain Priority Conservation Lands".



A vegetation study created by the National Parks and Wildlife service. This shows that TfNSW have vastly underplayed the significance of the remnant Cumberland woodland (specifically, endangered shale forest) in the corridor area.

Looking through the 3256 page [Draft Assessment Report](#) in the new plan that has been released, it would appear that few actions to update vegetation coverage maps have occurred in the Hawkesbury, in favour of study areas closer to the Aerotropolis closer to Badgerys Creek. I would have preferred that a Conservation Plan incorporating the Hawkesbury took at least *some* time to update the relevant studies to snapshot the state of the Cumberland vegetation *in* the Hawkesbury. Instead, the focus is overwhelmingly on the southern areas subject to more intensive development.



Downy Wattle, *Acacia pubescens*

One representative example of this is the treatment of an iconic species prominent to the Hawkesbury, such as the Downy Wattle (*Acacia Pubescens*).

A 2003 NPWS study showed 116 known populations of the species, with just over half of those known populations containing fewer than 20 stems. There are sites in Windsor Downs, Mountain Lagoon, Pitt Town and Scheyville are the major sites in the Hawkesbury LGA, and yet the draft Assessment Report instead targeted study areas on Penrith, Badgerys Creek and Wilton.

Considering the State Government's use of maps in their planning that are seriously out of date, or which disagree with other data, I hoped the Government would take the opportunity to do new work to establish current coverage and biodiversity threats to what's left – especially in those areas of the Hawkesbury that will be likely subject to the greatest development pressure within the time horizon of the plan (out to 2056), like Vineyard, Oakville and Maraylya.

Submissions have been extended to **9th October 2020**. I encourage you to [make your views known](#).

Category

1. Uncategorized

Tags

1. Badgerys Creek Airport
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