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Wedderburn: The future of a colony of koalas in Wedderburn hangs in the balance this week with bulldozers poised to move in and clear the animals habitat.

So say local conservationists who have called on the ministers for Planning and Environment, to grant the koalas a last minute reprieve.

They have asked the ministers to invoke the Heritage Act to prevent bulldozers clearing bushland near O'Hares Creek Gorge for sub-division.

A spokesman for the Minister for Environment, Tim Moore said the minister was considering the possibility of putting an interim conservation order on the area in an effort to save the colony.

The spokesman said the minister was not prepared to see the colony destroyed.

The president of the Macarthur branch of the National Parks Association, Grahame Douglas, said his information was that bulldozers were scheduled to move in to the Wedderburn area this week to begin clearing the Yeoman's Property sub-division.

He said members of his organisation would be prepared to obstruct the bulldozers in order to save the koala colony if the ministers refused to exercise their powers to issue a protection order under section 136 of the Heritage Act.

Mr Douglas said the NPA had called on the government to issue a protection order and to enter into negotiations for the aquisition of 10 of the 24 blocks proposed for sub-division.

He said the long term survival of the colony could be ensured by proclaiming 40 hectares of the area to be sub-divided, a nature reserve under the management of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Mr Douglas said koalas were an endangered species in New South Wales and the Wedderburn colony was particularly significant because it was disease free and close to the urban area of Sydney.

He said the colony which consisted of around 50 animals was lighter in colour than most koalas and had only been discovered two years ago.

Mr Douglas said with proper management and protection the colony could become an important tourist attraction for Campbelltown.

'The Governments response to this issue will be a test of their stated commitment to urban bushland conservation and to the preservation of one of NSW's endangered species,' Mr Douglas said.

He said the sub-division not only jeopardised the future of the koala colony but also placed in danger a number of significant Aboriginal rock paintings which he said could be vandalised if the area was opened up for sub-division.

Mr Douglas said experience elsewhere had demonstrated that housing developments close to koala colonies had led to the extinction of the animals.

He said the colony only fed on selected vegetation within the area and if forced to move from its current location by the sub-division would probably die out through starvation if not killed off by domestic pets and disease.

Representatives from the NPA hope to show Mr Moore members of the koala colony when he visits Wedderburn on Saturday to address the

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association's State Council.

The Mayor of Campbelltown, Alderman Peter Primrose said the council had been working on a plan for the past two months to try and purchase the area to be sub-divided in order to protect the koala habitat.

He said the council was not aware of imminent plans by the developers to bulldoze the koala habitat and the council's information was that the bulldozers would be working up to three kilometres from the area identified as the animals' home.

The Deputy Mayor Alderman John Hennessey said the council was currently preparing a report on the issue and he said he would do everything in his power to try to save the koalas.

"These koalas are one of our national treasures and if we don't do something immediately these beautiful animals will disappear from the face of the earth," Ald Hennessey said.

The city planner, Richard Meaker said the developers did not have council consent to go-ahead with plans to bulldoze the area this week.

He said according to recent aerial photographs of the area most of the region to be sub-divided was already cleared.