



Wildlife

Carers June Keys and Kate Watson with "Scratch" a two-month old possum that was found on Wansey Rd during light rail works. Picture: John Appleyard

## CITY EAST

# Fears for wildlife during Sydney Light Rail construction

Laura Aubusson, Southern Courier  
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A BABY brushtail possum nicknamed Scratch has become one of the faces of the fight to save trees earmarked for removal for Sydney's light rail line.

No animals or birds were rescued or relocated from the 40 mature trees chopped down on Alison Rd and Anzac Pde at Randwick, according to Transport for NSW.

But on Wansey Rd a baby brushtail possum and a nest of kookaburras were rescued when work started to remove 23 trees.



Wildlife Carer June Keys with "Scratch". Picture: John Appleyard



A baby possum was found on Wansey Rd during light rail construction. Picture: John Appleyard

The project ecologist took them to Struggletown Veterinary Hospital Randwick on Wednesday, December 30.

“The possum was found at the base of a tree and it was freezing. I called it Scratch because it had a scratch on it’s head, the poor darling,” Struggletown practice manager, Nicky Ronalds said.

The possum was found near the work site and the nest of two baby kookaburras and one egg – which hatched on the way home – was found in a tree just hours away from being cut down.

Wildlife carer Kate Watson was gobsmacked by the claim only one of the trees removed contained animals.

She called for independent experts to inspect the 700 trees approved for removal along the route as she anticipated up to 1000 possums, birds, bats and reptiles would be affected with tree hollows and natural food supply being removed.



'Scratch' when it was found with a scratch on its head on Wansey Rd. Picture: Struggletown Veterinary Randwick



The few-day old kookaburras found in a tree on Wansey Rd. Picture: Struggletown Veterinary Randwick  
A Transport for NSW spokesman said “no animals required relocation during the works on Alison Rd between Anzac Pde and Darley Rd earlier this month”.

Ms Watson and wildlife volunteers met with light rail representatives to offer help before works started on Alison Rd on Thursday, January 7, but were told they weren’t needed.

“After the meeting we saw at ground level a little possum asleep in one of the trees on Alison Rd.” she said. “Clearly there were animals where they thought there were no animals.”

The wildlife rescue group WIRES says it was refused entry to assist with the monitoring of fauna during the destruction of the 40 Randwick trees on Alison Rd and Anzac Pde, following public concern for animal welfare.



WIREs volunteer Zoe Harrison was ready with equipment and her rescue van to help monitor wildlife during the removal of trees on Alison Rd, but wasn't required. Picture: Braden Fastier  
Protesters contacted the group to attend on Friday, January 8, after spotting possums in trees that were set to be cut down.

WIREs volunteer Zoe Harrison said a colleague attended on Friday and was told to return with appropriate safety gear on Saturday to assist. But when Ms Harrison arrived the next day she was also refused entry.

A Transport for NSW spokesman said work sites could "only be accessed by accredited personnel" and the on-site ecologist was trained in the removal and relocation of wildlife.



WIREs volunteer Zoe Harrison. Picture: Braden Fastier  
"I don't know how an ecologist would monitor all of the trees on their own," Ms Harrison said.

The NSW transport spokesman said Altrac had "met with WIREs to discuss the process for managing fauna during tree removal". But a WIREs spokesman said they did not receive any calls from Altrac before, during or after the works.