



KOALA HELP COMING FROM THE USA !

It's time for some good news. In amidst so much destruction of Mother Nature, witnessing the potential end game for the Great Barrier Reef, the desperate battle to stop Adani from opening up the Galillee Basin for the world's biggest coal mine, we need some LIGHT !

Our Co-ordinator has just come back from the United States where she succeeded in her quest to get a major US conservation organisation involved in the campaign to save the koalas. It's no mean feat to get the support of any American environmental or animal welfare organisation as they are under siege with the new Trump administration !

But there's a strong link to the US. In 1999, Australians for Animals Inc. succeeded in getting the Koala listed as Threatened under the US Endangered Species Act. It was the first time an Australian organisation had been successful in gaining a listing for an Aussie

animal. After nearly three years of tireless work by a small team of scientists, researchers, lawyers from the Environmental Defenders Office, (EDO) the submission was presented to the American government in Washington DC.

If the Democrats had won government, we would have been able to upgrade that listing to ENDANGERED on the basis of the terrible loss of animals in NSW and Queensland. Unfortunately, President Trump has announced his intention to repeal the ESA so any potential legal action in the US is not possible.

BUT A MAJOR CAMPAIGN IS.



MAJOR KOALA CAMPAIGN IN THE MAKING

We won't announce details until June when the campaign strategy is in place but it will be a wonderful asset and end the media shut down in this country.

A media shut down which is complicit refusing to bring to the public the increasingly fragile state of remaining koalas and the desperate need to protect habitat and deal with climate change impacts.

Back home in Australia, AFA is very active . The charity has engaged the EDO to seek grounds for a particular legal challenge which is rarely used and involves major research. Its taken months of research by AFA, EDO lawyers as well as some friendly scientists to get to a place where we can strategise an action plan which may or may not include legal action.

In the process, we've discovered how extremely weak the state and

federal environmental protection laws really are. There are endless provisions in legislation which allow departments, agencies and governments to ignore the endangered and threatened listing of animals.

One of the outcomes of the Federal listing of Queensland and NSW koalas as Vulnerable under the EPBC Act was a National Koala Conservation & Management Strategy which was to run from 2009-2014. After spending weeks following up on the recommendations, AFA found virtually nothing has been undertaken.

In 2014, the Federal Government was supposed to produce a Koala Recovery Plan for NSW and

Queensland koalas. By March, 2017, AFA realising that there was no sign of any Koala Recovery Plan, put in Freedom of Information requests to the Federal Dept. of the Environment seeking any information on the Plan.

In response, the Dept. advised that the Minister had extended the finalisation of the Plan until June, 2018.

Under the EPBC legislation, he can extend the finalisation for six years. When the koalas in NSW and Queensland were listed as Vulnerable in 2012, under the legislation a Recovery Plan had to follow when the Conservation and Management Strategy ended in 2014. In the face of the catastrophic losses of Qld and NSW koalas, the Minister's response to a real Koala emergency, a most critical moment in terms of their future

survival, his response is to extend the Recovery Plan to the maximum time frame legally allowed. 2012-2018 .. six years.

At the same time, AFA also learned from the lawyers, that the Recovery Plan doesn't have to be anything special; that there's no way of forcing the government to include critical issues such as a ban on clearing koala habitat or making the evaluation of climate change impacts mandatory.

There are loopholes in the NSW legislation which allows Local Government to literally bulldoze koala habitat even if it is listed as endangered. With the looming ratification of the NSW Biodiversity & Conservation Act (a misnomer if ever there was one), the flimsy protection for the remaining koala colonies in NSW will be lost.

Continued...

SO... WE HAVE A MAJOR BATTLE ON OUR HANDS

The koala numbers in NSW could be as low as 1,000. In Queensland, according to rumour which AFA can't substantiate, the population could be as low as 1,500. Whatever the estimates are, what we do know is that habitat loss has been catastrophic as has the collapse of populations.

WE NEED FUNDS TO MOUNT THIS BATTLE

As our supporters well know, AFA rarely asks for funds but we are facing a shortfall at a time when we need to have money to pay scientists, to make trips to Canberra, Sydney and Brisbane to see lawyers and to lobby.

AFA intends to make a formal submission to the Federal government to upgrade the listing under the EPBC Act from Vulnerable to Endangered. This listing would give the koala more protection. All the research which AFA has undertaken constitute grounds for a formal listing submission.

In the meantime, we will be working tirelessly with the US organisation and attempting to make the campaign international by bringing in other countries. Time is running out for the Koalas in both states.

Neither the \$10 million NSW government grant or the measly \$100,000 Queensland government grant to aid koala conservation will make any difference. Neither grant focuses on loss of habitat and the desperate need to protect remaining areas.

AFA has a very long history with the koala. Our Co ordinator ran the

Sun Herald Koala Fund (last century!) and the charity campaigned hard to prevent koalas from being exported to overseas zoos.

What we are witnessing is the looming extinction of koalas in both NSW and south eastern Queensland save for a few low numbered colonies.

AFA uses social media as well to raise the profile of koalas so that people know there's a whole other story behind the sweet images and nice stories in the media. The media shut down is without doubt the worst problem all genuine environmental organisations are facing. Our US ally has had many dealings with Rupert Murdoch (personally) and they will be looking to arrange a meeting with him. It's shameful the attitude of our media to what's happening to Australia's unique and irreplaceable wildlife.

Sue Arnold & Friends



Please Give Generously

WE NEED FUNDS TO MAKE THIS CAMPAIGN A WIN FOR KOALAS.



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