



KOALAS AT GRAVE RISK OF EXTINCTION ON THE FAR NORTH COAST AND THE ENTIRE STATE



PRECIOUS LOVE.

In May this year, the NSW Scientific Committee recommended that Koala populations between Tweed Heads and the Brunswick River be declared endangered. According to the report, the population is now around 144 animals, although this estimate is likely to be over optimistic.

In its conclusion, the Committee states:-

“The population between the Tweed and Brunswick Rivers is facing a very high risk of extinction in New South Wales in the near future.”

In spite of this grim warning, the Baird government has no legal obligation to ensure better protection of habitat or any measures to protect the remaining koalas.

In July this year, the Baird government released its draft Biodiversity Conservation

legislation which will, in effect, allow for a total free-for-all in terms of land clearing. With more than 1,000 threatened and animal species in NSW, if the Biodiversity legislation gets through Parliament, the Koala will be history and extinction pressures on threatened animal species will go through the roof.

The Baird government will repeal the Native Vegetation Act, Threatened Species Act, Nature Conservation Trust Act and sections of the National Parks and Wildlife Act for no other reason than to facilitate

developers, foreign ownership, and corporations taking over agricultural land.

Land clearing laws will be severely weakened. There are no triggers to demonstrate serious and irreversible impacts on biodiversity.

Land clearing will be permitted on the basis of self-assessment or in certain circumstances under the Minister for Primary Industry, the Minister for the Environment now largely irrelevant.

STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE



On the Far North Coast, the threats to the Koalas are so major it's a miracle any Koalas have survived. Dog attacks, wildfire, vehicle strikes and disease have played havoc with populations.

Habitat loss due to massive urban development have left animals isolated. The Pacific Highway caused a huge death toll as animals attempt to cross the busy highway. Up until 2002, vehicle strike was responsible for 34% of known Koala mortalities.

Disease has caused many problems. As their habitat is reduced and their ability to reproduce with healthy animals has diminished, chlamydia and a Koala retrovirus has ensured less than healthy animals. Chlamydia causes blindness, infertility and pneumonia. The Koala retrovirus has been linked to certain cancers and suppression of the immune system.

The approval of massive music festivals in Byron - the Bluesfest, Splendour in the Grass and Falls Festivals have caused untold misery for Koalas.

On the Bluesfest site, some 20 Koalas have been reported dead since the festival moved to the Tyagarah site. At the Splendour in the Grass/Falls Festival site which abuts the Billinudgel Nature Reserve (once an important stronghold for Koala populations), the intrusions of up to 36,000 people over four and five days has resulted in many Koalas disappearing from the area. Splendour site is slap bang in the middle of a critical wildlife corridor which stretches from the Mt Warning World Heritage Area to the coast.

Unfortunately, low frequency noise causes major disruption for the animals. Sub-woofers and certain other musical instruments which pound out low frequency boom boom noises can create havoc in breeding season. Low frequency noise from the constant traffic on the Pacific Highway is also causing problems for the Koalas which are principally coastal animals with habitats close to the road.

TOO MANY THREATS!

Then there's domestic dog attacks. Many people dump their dogs in bushland. Others allow dogs to roam at will and although the full extent of mortality caused by dog attacks is not known, it is high and increasing.

Koalas attacked by dogs die a miserable and painful death. As these gentle creatures are particularly vulnerable to shock and have no defence other than their sharp claws, it's a one way street in terms of who wins. Many cubs are left to die as a result of these attacks. Even a very small dog can inflict terrible injuries to a Koala.

Many of AFA's long time supporters will be aware that the charity succeeded in listing the Koala under the US Endangered Species Act. At the time, listing under the US legislation ensured greater protection for Koalas. Unfortunately, as globalisation took over as the primary goal of western nations, protection of the environment and wildlife became an issue of low concern.

However, AFA has retained its connections with many of the Koala scientists who supervised

and/or contributed to our scientific submission which took several years to complete. These same scientists are now saying that NSW Koalas are at risk of extinction across the entire state as a result of massive habitat loss and a complete failure by governments to give proper protection to the animals.

Bushfires cause major mortality in Koala populations as the animals are unable to escape and eucalypts are highly flammable.

A proposed highway deviation at Ballina will wipe out a nationally significant population if it goes ahead (and it looks like this will happen). Local residents and conservation groups have opposed this deviation for over 10 years but the State and Federal governments won't listen. The deviation would split Ballina's



By Sardaka (talk) 09:55, 27 February 2015 (UTC) - Own work, CC BY 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=38627318

most important wildlife corridor in two. An area which is home to more than 38 threatened or endangered species.

There are other alternative routes for the highway which will not impact on Koalas or other threatened species but thus far, politicians and the Roads and Maritime Services aren't listening.

Let's not forget the Shenhua Chinese mine at Gunnedah.

The company argued its plan to move 262 koalas over the life of the mine was reviewed by academics at Melbourne and Sydney universities. The Nature Conservation Council said the decision meant 800 hectares of koala habitat around Gunnedah would probably be destroyed.

Although the mine may now not go ahead according to press reports, there's nothing to stop a new application and attempts by other mining companies.



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HABITAT PROTECTION THE ONLY REAL SOLUTION

According to the Great Koala National Park (which doesn't currently exist but is on the wish list of the National Parks Association), over 80% of koalas in NSW live outside protected areas and there is no national conservation reserve to ensure the species long term survival.

By contrast, China has established a national park covering one million hectares of bamboo forest to protect their Pandas.

According to the Park website, koala numbers have plummeted by a third in just 20 years. Koalas have disappeared from 75% of their former range. Most of the remaining high quality habitat lies in State Forests and on private land which will be a focus of the draft Biodiversity legislation in permitting SELF ASSESSMENT in terms of clearing.

As the Park website says so graphically, IF NOTHING IS DONE TO PROTECT AND RECONNECT KOALA HABIT, POPULATION DECLINES WILL CONTINUE UNABATED AND EXTINCTION IS SADLY INEVITABLE.

Port Macquarie Koala Hospital which has worked tirelessly over many years to treat sick and injured koalas expresses the same sentiments on their website.

"Port Macquarie has the largest population of koalas on the East Coast of Australia. Koala habitat is

being diminished by development that will eventually cause the koala population to become extinct unless there are large areas set aside for the active protection of the koalas' natural habitat and for the future of the koala."

If the Koala goes extinct in NSW, this will be a NATIONAL TRAGEDY. With a truly appalling former Federal Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt, giving approval to any project which threatened Koalas plus the most anti-environment government ever seen in NSW, the Koala can only rely on public outcry for any likelihood of survival.

The omens are not good. Malcolm Turnbull appointed Josh Frydenberg as Federal Minister for the Environment and Energy. The two portfolios are in direct opposition to each other. Frydenberg does not have any kind of reputation as a politician with concerns about the environment. On the contrary, he's a resource industry proponent.



CLIMATE CHANGE

Koala is one of the ten most vulnerable species to climate change.

"I feel as if my work is done," said Greg Hunt last month on leaving the climate policy role that over nearly nine years, in opposition and then in government, he made his own.

He must be kidding. The worst Federal Minister for the Environment has left Australia's unique wildlife and environment in tatters. The Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area is in such bad shape that it's highly unlikely any significant recovery will occur.

Wildlife has simply been ignored. Yet the Koala, Kangaroos, Wombats and so many other unique species are only found on this ancient continent. It's almost impossible to imagine that ANY government would drive these

creatures to extinction in the name of "progress" or "growth".

The Koalas have contributed billions of dollars to Australia's economy through tourism yet almost none of the money has been directed back to Koala conservation. Scientists have warned Federal and State governments that climate change is a major problem for Australia which has been identified as one of the countries most heavily impacted.

Forests die when temperatures increase. Entire ecosystems change and the ecological role of wildlife is inhibited or destroyed. Koalas regenerate native forests Koalas are uniquely adapted to specific eucalypts in specific areas which is why translocation is not a great option.

We are facing a truly desperate situation.



**PLEASE
SAVE
THE
KOALAS**

GREEN PARTY SILENCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Those of you who vote for the Greens will have been disappointed to hear virtually nothing about Koalas much less any other Australian wildlife.

Instead, the new leader of the Greens focused on social issues like refugees, same sex marriage and a raft of issues which have nothing to do with the environment.

The diminished vote for the Greens in the Senate which has seen one Green Senate seat lost is probably an indication of the dismay that many environmental organisations and community groups are feeling.

With no loud voice for the environment at a critical Federal election, many voters wondered who to support.

Labor focused on climate change and the Coalition on jobs and growth.

Meantime, animals die, our agricultural lands are sold to foreign corporations and support for the mining industry continues.



Kate Auburn https://www.flickr.com/photos/fresholad/171912677

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES ENSURE WEAK PROTECTION

The Federal Department of the Environment website has the following message which is supposed to support the listing of Koalas as a Threatened Species under national environmental legislation.

Although website words sound great, in essence they are weasel words which are not helpful in ensuring protection.

“National environment protection of the Queensland, New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory koala populations strengthened the existing state and territory protections for this iconic species. National environment protection doesn't mean that all activities in these areas will require federal environmental approval.

At the householder level, minor activities, such as cutting down a single tree on private land in an area where koalas are listed under national environment law, are highly unlikely to require federal environment approval.

At the planning level, sustainable development that

takes into account koala protection can continue, even in urban and peri-urban areas with koala populations.

Only projects likely to have a significant impact on the koala population in Queensland, New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory will need to be assessed under national environment law.

Any new development or project that is deemed to have an unacceptable impact on the listed koala populations will not be approved under national environment law.”

As AFA is working tirelessly on the Koala issue, we can assure our supporters that the Federal guidelines provide meaningless protection for the Koalas. The approval of Shenhua mine and the ongoing battle over the Ballina highway deviation are clear evidence of non-action by the Feds.

WHAT AFA CAN DO

We're working at the State level lobbying politicians and at the same time gathering comprehensive research on the extent of threats to Koala populations in NSW.

AFA has lobbied the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Shadow Minister for the Environment in the NSW Parliament. We have also lobbied the Coalition."

We know that a number of NSW politicians from the Greens and Animal Justice Party are on side and are deeply concerned. The most urgent need is to oppose

the draft Biodiversity legislation which the Baird government will attempt to get through Parliament in October.

AFA is also commissioning an expert ecologist to do a study on the festival sites so we can understand the extent of impacts to the Koala populations on the Far North Coast.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Write to Premier Baird at Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney 2001 and tell him that his anti environment policies are unacceptable.

That he will go down in history as the Premier who ensured the extinction of Koalas in NSW. That you do not support the draft Biodiversity legislation.

Contact your local State MP or MLC and let him/her know that you are very concerned about the failure of the government to protect this iconic species.

Help fund the studies which need to be undertaken so AFA can mount legal challenges and lobby for Parliamentary inquiries.

We are facing a truly desperate situation. Don't let the Koala go extinct!

**For the Animals,
Sue Arnold & Friends**



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