



Australians for Animals

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MAY 2019 NEWSLETTER



FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS FAILED TO PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT

Here is an excerpt from the Senate Inquiry into Faunal Extinction interim report by the Chair of the Senate Inquiry, Senator Janet Rice.

This is a critically important summary of what our wildlife is facing under the Coalition government. It was released just before Parliament shut after the Federal election was called.

THIS IS ESSENTIAL READING

"The most important issue to arise from the Inquiry thus far is how totally inadequate our current Federal legislation is in terms of

protecting the environment. We're dealing with the drivers of extinction. The EPBC Act is totally inadequate to deal with the situation — the problem is there's no framework for protection.

So many developments are not referred to the federal government for approval. There are no actions to minimise impacts, a lack of monitoring and compliance.

We have a situation where



Federal legislation leaves it up to the states to implement approvals and no mechanisms for follow up. Offsets are a total joke — they

don't work. They're accepted as the mechanics to ostensibly deal with impacts but incapable of doing the job."

FEDERAL ELECTION MAKE ENVIRONMENT NO.1 ISSUE

Our wildlife are suffering terrible fates as their habitats are being systematically destroyed. In spite of mainstream media covering up the most appalling environmental crises in this country, the environment is high up on the list of voters' concerns.

And so it should be. Australia can't afford to lose any more species, populations and ecosystems. The impacts of this catastrophic loss will not only be economic but the culture and lifestyle of all Australians will change forever.

The Federal election outcome is critical to the survival of Australia's unique and irreplaceable wildlife. Their future is on the line.

It's pretty clear the mainstream media is dedicated to ensuring that the plight of the koala and all wildlife is not featured as an election issue. Social media says otherwise. AFA's Facebook Koala Crisis page has had millions of hits, demonstration that a whopping majority of Australians are deeply concerned over the catastrophic



government driven wipe-out of koalas, their ecosystems, our coastal forests, the state of our rivers. The list is endless.

Given the appalling saga of the Lower Darling with millions of fish dying because the water rights have been guzzled up by foreign corporations; the interim report of the Senate Inquiry into Faunal Extinction which demonstrates that Federal environment legislation is so weak that there's no monitoring, enforcement or management.

Unfortunately, the interim inquiry has had almost zero media in spite of the fact that hundreds and hundreds of submissions have been received. Many of them from some of Australia's top scientific experts expressing their deep alarm at the absolute failure of the Federal government to protect Australia's biodiversity.

Recommendations have been ignored. Have you heard one word about the report from PM Morrison, Bill Shorten, Greens Leader? Nothing but silence.

Under Abbott, Turnbull and now Morrison, the Environmental Protection & Biodiversity Act (EPBC) has become nothing more than a toothless paper tiger. Any possibility of preventing massive destruction of koala habitat by developers is removed.

Developers can now self refer the project to the Federal government if vulnerable or endangered species of plants and animals listed under the EPBC Act are in danger from the development. Let's say a corporation has a project which is going to take out koala habitat. The corporation, not the government, decides whether to refer the project to the Federal government for approval—which is supposed to happen according to the Federal Koala Referral Guidelines – but many companies simply ignore the requirements and go ahead bulldozing down critical habitat, killing koalas and other wildlife.

Continued...

GUIDELINES WOEFULLY INADEQUATE

Koala Referral Guidelines don't provide for any legal challenges, monitoring or enforcement.

If a developer refers the project to the federal government the only requirement is for the developer to draw up a "koala plan of management" which may sound nice on paper but is completely meaningless. And un-enforceable.

Or they can choose to "offset" the damage caused by the development. Offsets can be made in dollars or by claiming to protect already protected areas such as reserves. In all instances, these offsets are completely meaningless as they provide no substitute habitat.

Another option is to plant trees. Since it takes 5-7 years before any suitable eucalypt species has grown sufficiently to provide food and shelter for a couple of koalas, they will have long since died of starvation, stress and disease.

Although there is a massive fine and imprisonment for illegally developing a koala habitat which falls under the Koala Referral Guidelines, not one developer has ever been charged.

THE THREATENED SPECIES SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

This is a bad joke. The only way that the koala can be upgraded on the EPBC lists of vulnerable, endangered species is via a recommendation from the Committee.

AFA has, for the past week or so, attempted to get anyone to answer the phone in the Canberra secretariat. No answer. Just a message saying that there's no one to take the call. So AFA tried the Federal Department of the Environment switchboard to see if there was any way to get to the secretariat.



Photo taken by Ted Fensom. Queensland urbanisation.

Nope. We could leave a message. Or send an email with the questions AFA want answered. Someone would respond.

AFA duly emailed the questions – which are critically important as the legal stuff is a veritable nightmare. No response. So, in fact, if any conservation organisation is seeking to upgrade a wildlife species for better protection, there's no one in the Canberra political jungle who will address the issue.

No one even acknowledged the email. AFA will now try and make contact with the Chair of the Scientific Committee. With no provisions for emergency listings of wildlife (clearly necessary for NSW and Queensland koalas, they need to be upgraded to endangered), and any submission to the Threatened Species Committee can take years for a decision to be made, Australia's wildlife has been hung out to die.

Development and big money rules.

NSW ELECTION RESULTS – A DISASTER FOR KOALAS

It is tragic that the Coalition government retained power in NSW. One of the first acts of this anti-environmental Premier was to axe the Office of Environment & Heritage.

What this means is that NSW is the only state in Australia without a department for the environment.

If anyone doubts that the NSW Premier and her National Party mates are dedicated to

exponential growth with no regard for the environment or wildlife, the axing of the OEH says it all.

OEH has plenty of critics. Their work has been second class but heavily interfered with by the Coalition government knocking back budgets and ensuring that useless programs such as Save the Koala Strategy were set up – with no possibility of securing any koala population. It's been obvious



since Premier Mike Baird came to power that if the Coalition's future intention to ensure massive growth were to proceed, the environment had to be bottom of the list.

That's why he took steps to repeal the Threatened Species Act, the Native Vegetation Act and replace these laws with legislation which effectively removed protection and any legal challenges.

But at least there were some scientists willing to do the hard yards in OEH. Now there are

none. The OEH will no longer exist, all environmental decisions will go to the Department of Planning. A disaster,

Did anyone hear Gladys Berejiklian say prior to the election that she would axe the OEH if she came to power?

No. Like all the anti-environmental actions by this dreadful government, the voting public has been kept in the dark. These Coalition politicians treat voters like zombies.



**PLEASE
HELP SAVE THE
KOALAS**

SOUTHWEST SYDNEY'S HEALTHY KOALA POPULATION NOW AT RISK OF EXTINCTION

At a Scientific workshop organised by OEH last year, AFA was present thanks to the efforts of one of our scientific mentors. Our coordinator was pretty horrified to see that the OEH had created a number of "koala hubs" which did not include the Campbelltown/Appin healthy expanding population of koalas.

She stood up in the audience and asked why this important population had not been designated a koala hub, thus ensuring protection and focus. A population that is almost certainly the LAST remaining healthy and expanding population in Australia.

The response was vague and failed completely to provide any explanation.

It soon became obvious why. LendLease and other companies have a huge metropolis of three cities project in the planning stages. Part of a Greater Sydney Plan which has been orchestrated by former PM Turnbull's wife,

Lucy in her capacity as CEO of the Greater Sydney Commission.

The same woman who was "too busy" according to her staff, to consider the impacts of this massive project on the south west Sydney koala population.

The OEH put together a submission on providing some minimal protection. This will now be ignored. The Roads & Maritime Services refuse to construct underpasses and overpasses – there's nothing to save these koalas other than public outrage. Legal challenges are extremely difficult these days.



USA HELP IS ON THE WAY

On a recent trip to the USA, our Co ordinator was blessed with an opportunity to meet with one of the world's most famous ecologists. Professor Paul Ehrlich and his wife Anne, who authored the Population Bomb in the sixties, predicting that human over-population will destroy civilisation, invited Sue Arnold to lunch, not once but twice.

Meeting with these extraordinarily gifted scientists was inspiring. As Paul and Anne have previously lived in Sydney for over three years and travelled from one end of the country to the other, they probably know Australia better than most.

The Ehrlichs have both signed a scientific letter that AFA has put together (with the help of Australian koala scientific experts) calling on the Queensland Premier to urgently stop the destruction of koalas by passing legislation to protect habitat.

Many scientists have already signed on as well. Professor Ehrlich has also given our co-ordinator immense help by providing contacts in Australia who may be willing to help in the desperate struggle to stop the koala going extinct in NSW and Queensland.

AFA also met with some of our US environmental/animal welfare



By Paul R. Ehrlich - Ehrlich P. R. (2010) "The MAHB, the Culture Gap, and Some Really Inconvenient Truths". PLoS Biology 8(4): e1000330. doi:10.1371/journal.pbio.1000330. CC BY 2.5. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9952098>

colleagues to request a major sign on letter addressed to the PM, Leader of the Opposition, Queensland and NSW Premiers calling for habitat protection for koalas.

AFA has tried the major US conservation groups repeatedly but without success. It's important to remember that most of these organisations are in much the same position as Australian groups. Struggling to cope with the devastation to

wildlife, the marine and terrestrial environments brought on by the Trump administration.

However, our contacts are now with community-based organisations, shelters, local conservation groups, businesses who are environmentally conscious. We have two wonderful women in San Francisco and Los Angeles now gathering as many signatures to the letters and spreading the word far and wide.



PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY

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AUSTRALIANS FOR ANIMALS
PO BOX 414
BRUNSWICK HEADS 2483



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givenow.com.au/koalacrisis

FANTASTIC HELP IN AUSTRALIA AS WELL

Thanks to a wonderful caring dedicated Irish nursing sister, Michelle C. and her lovely partner plus a few caring helpers, we now have an email list of every conservation/shelter/community organisation caring for wildlife in NSW, Queensland, Victoria, and South Australia.

These wonderful volunteers have also run a Koala Auction which has raised significant funds to help in our campaigns.

AFA will use the email lists before the federal election to try and build a national coalition with one sole focus. Legal protection of koala habitat.

WHY? Because the koala is an UMBRELLA species FOR coastal forests. Legal protection of habitat would also protect a raft of species including gliders, possums, birds, insects and the entire ecosystem.



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PLEASE SUPPORT AFA AT THIS CRITICAL TIME

How you vote on May 18 is going to be the most important vote in terms of Australia's environmental future. Please take the time to check out the policies of all the parties.

AFA depends on your financial support! We're on the front line and AFA has the experience of successful campaigns in over 30 years of operation.

*For the animals,
Sue Arnold & Friends.*



SAVE THE KOALA CAMPAIGN GUIDELINES



AFA has put together a booklet for communities fighting to save koala habitat which is free on line.

The booklet is full of useful information including rescue guidelines, hospital contacts, media and political guidelines. The booklet is free of charge.

GET YOURS HERE:
<http://bit.ly/koalarescue>