



Australians for Animals

PROTECT • NURTURE • RESTORE

Reg. Charity No. CFN12644

PO Box 414, Brunswick Heads 2483 Australia Tel: 61 2 6680 3674 Fax: 61 2 6680 3612 Email: info@australiansforanimals.org.au

JUNE 2021 NEWSLETTER



KOALAS IN DEEP STRIFE AS GOVERNMENTS CONTINUE TO DESTROY HABITATS

It's hard to know where to start as there's nothing but bad news. One reason why this newsletter is late is that AFA has been locked down (not in) with lawyers and scientists as we continue the hard slog of trying to find a way to stop the appalling destruction of koala habitat in NSW. Specifically, the forests.

Queensland and Victoria are hell bent on wiping out remaining forest habitat. South Australian government

has done nothing to ensure the survival of koalas as massive urbanisation projects continue to wipe out habitat.

Unfortunately, AFA doesn't have the resources to deal with more than the destruction in NSW which is so significant that the likelihood of koalas surviving for another decade are increasingly remote as local and regional extinctions are happening under our noses.



STOCK IMAGE

NSW FORESTRY CORPORATION

Right now, AFA is waiting for the next disastrous logging approval by the Forestry Corporation in three forests critical to koala survival. Pine Creek, Newry and Upper Kalang state forests in the mid north coast of NSW.

Pine Creek near Coffs Harbour provides a perfect example of the fate awaiting remaining koala populations. Known as the "koala nursery" key compartments containing healthy populations of koalas are currently under Forestry Corporation planning stages for logging.

Communities and koala experts are appalled by the impending operations. In 2013 a regional summary of koala populations estimated the koalas to numbers to be greater than 1000 in the coastal Coffs Harbour and northern Bellingen region and between 500-1000 in the Coffs Harbour



EASTERN PYGMY POSSUM

Hinterland.

The study suggested that the Coffs/Bellingen population is: "the most critically important koala regional population in this region and perhaps one of the most important in the nation"

North coast koala populations have declined by 50% over the past 15-20 years. This estimate was made before the bushfires. Sussan Ley, minister for the environment issued a press release in January, 2020 when the bushfires were raging, indicating 8,000 koalas had been incinerated on the mid north coast. Yet logging continued. And continues in forests which desperately need time to recover, to provide a safe refuge for surviving animals. Let's not forget that these forests are home to sugar, squirrel and greater gliders, possums, countless bird species, flora, insects, all contributing to the coastal forest ecosystems. Systems that provide us with fresh air, oxygen, fresh water, and food for the soul.

Bellingen shire is at the heart of massive, unprecedented logging operations with logging taking out more trees for burning as "renewable energy". A meeting between the Bellingen Council and the Forestry Corporation shows the contempt of the NSW government for public protest and potentially

irreversible environmental damage. Mayor Dominic King summed up the rage as a result of a recent meeting between the Council and Forestry Corporation.

".. what we received was the same old spin via a self-congratulatory powerpoint presentation that cherry picked the science and produced inaccurate facts on the impacts of industrial logging. They stated that koalas and other endangered species were doing well in logged forests. We are seeing massive reductions in koala numbers with a 71% decline in this state since the Black Summer bushfires."

A scientist commenting on the Bellingen Shire proposed logging operations which will impact almost 4,000 hectares said: "if these operations go ahead, the deforestation rate will be ten times that of the Amazon and around 7% of the public forests will be affected. This greatly exceeds the sustainable annual yield of the forest and will have drastic long-term impacts on habitat, water availability and quality."



www.twitter.com/koalacrisis



www.facebook.com/koalacrisis

THE 2050 MYTH

It's nothing short of a tragedy that mainstream media, politicians, major conservation groups and even the Environment Defenders Office continue with the same old mantra that "koalas will be extinct by 2050".

This prediction is based on modelling done by WWF in 2018, based on a 2012 desktop study. It was done before the bushfires, before the extent of the industrial logging which has transpired since the bushfires were extinguished, without the massive urbanisation plans for southwest Sydney, it's a long list of exclusions.

Models are only as good as the information fed into them. Koala numbers are thrown about, some media claimed 60,000 koalas died in the fires, other media says 30,000. The bottom line? No one knows because no government will undertake any on the ground koala surveys.

No refuges, no legislation to protect habitat, industrial logging bulldozing and clear felling primary koala habitat, forests now being logged for "renewable energy", federal and state governments hell bent on removing any democratic right of the public citizen to challenge breaches of approval conditions in court.

The continued repetition of this 2050 mantra is no doubt welcomed by governments as predictions which focus on outcomes 30 years in the future are a political gift and provide grounds to do nothing. Extinction is not in their time.

AFA wrote a formal letter to the CEO of WWF expressing the charity's deep concern that WWF continued to push the 2050 mantra. He rejected AFA's request to put out a press release indicating the 2018 model's

predictions need to be changed and that koalas are going locally and regionally extinct NOW. It took weeks and a number of emails to the CEO's personal assistant to get any response. This is really disrespectful. AFA is now over 30 years old, in fact it is one of the longest serving wildlife groups. Communication between conservation groups should be a given.

Not in 2021. Big well-funded conservation groups ignore the grass roots. Trying to get through by phone or email is almost impossible as many of these organisations are now more like corporations.

AFA has always been a grass roots organisation. The charity identifies with community, in particular the widest community. Encouraging leadership to ensure the survival of our irreplaceable wildlife, forests and environment must depend on all Australians, not simply left to environmental organisations.

The two most serious issues facing Planet Earth are climate change and biodiversity loss.

Climate change has received a great deal of focus for obvious reasons, biodiversity loss has been pushed to the backburner. Grass roots campaigns engaging everyone are now critically important. Best way to start is with the community.

As a specialist in building major coalitions, potentially one way that the Coalition and Labour parties could be forced to put the environment at



STOCK IMAGE

the top of the political agenda is to create a major national coalition including tourism, local government, First Nation leaders, financial institutions, CWA, farmers, conservation groups and community organisations. A national coalition with the environment as primary focus.

If there's one thing governments hate it's unholy alliances. Because they involve "the public", they're largely successful. You can't label a financial institution or the CWA as "greenies"!

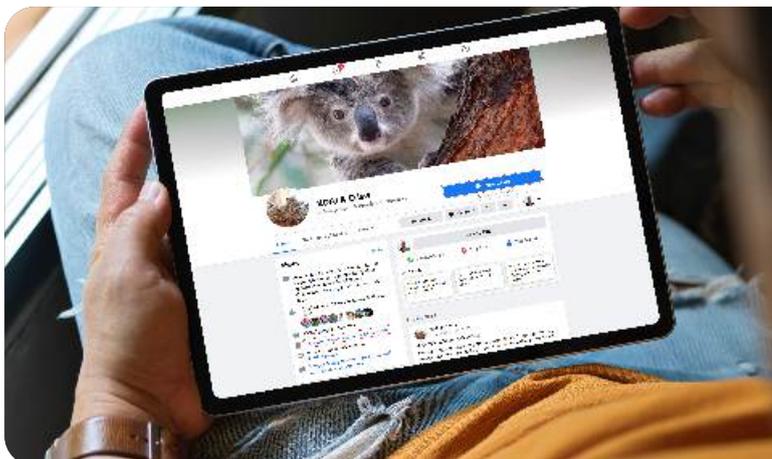
The forces of darkness are lining up at the Federal and state government level.

Federally, the minister for environment is trying again to get legislation amending/weakening further the Environmental Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act. In effect giving the power of major approvals to state governments. A

terrible scenario.

Some of you may have read that PM Morrison is now attempting to strip the non-profit status of charities registered with the Australian National Charities Commission if its members are likely to commit a summary offence. In other words stifle protest. The Assistant Treasurer told a Murdoch paper that the federal government wanted to stop activists "masquerading as charities". Charities could be stripped of their status for supporting protests and whistle-blowers.

NSW is a basket case with a frighteningly weak state environmental planning policy for koalas now virtually incapable of protecting any animal. Industrial logging is a juggernaut wiping out ecosystems and critically important endangered irreplaceable fauna and flora.



FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK

Engaging with and sharing our facebook page and posts helps create awareness of the KOALA CRISIS

www.facebook.com/koalacrisis

THE LEGAL DIFFICULTIES

Hard to believe but it's now almost a year of legal research, legal conferences, endless meetings on skype and zoom with lawyers, a huge growing pile of documents, reports, legalisation changes, parliamentary budget estimate hearings, hansard, obtaining scientific opinions and reports, and we're still not in court.

The situation is increasingly urgent as we know once Forestry starts logging these three forests, it will be too late to stop all the damage. Although AFA is a client in this matter with the EDO, we have repeatedly requested the lawyer representing us to please get a second opinion as to whether we have the grounds needed to get into court.

AFA let the EDO know the charity is not asking for free advice, the board is happy to pay for a second opinion as believe saving the forests is so urgent.

In our experience, running precedental law suits depends on finding senior counsel with fire in his/her belly. These days with funding cut, the EDO policy is to take on legal challenges which special counsel believes have a good chance of being won.

So AFA's legal challenge is a precedent. EDO won't seek a second opinion. But all is not lost. An old friend, a high powered lawyer, has offered to help. All AFA can say is that we'll keep keeping on. Losing our forests is just not on.

We're dealing with a bunch of politicians who govern by spin. Making grandiose promises to double the koala population by 2050 when the destruction approved by

the same government is driving koalas to extinction.

Having gone through the budget estimate hearings, reading the incredible misinformation given by the NSW environment minister about koalas, it's becoming awfully obvious that what Australia needs is for political parties led by responsible, well educated, compassionate environmentally aware people who understand that climate change and biodiversity loss must be addressed as a priority. You can't have a healthy economy without a healthy environment.

Mainstream media reports that as soon as we're all vaccinated, the big Australia plan is back on with massive migration in the hundreds of thousands. All immigrants needing homes, all homes needing timber for construction. Goodbye forests and wildlife.

Ministers either ignore emails, petitions, phone calls or their staff sends back a response months later, a response that's completely meaningless, a mindless repetition of the spin.

In April and May, AFA ran full page ads directed at Rob Stokes, Minister for Planning in his Pittwater electorate. Hard hitting ads which



OUR OPEN LETTER IN THE PITWATERLIFE PUBLICATION

spelled out the government's failures and misinformation campaigns.

As an indication of the apathy now in plague proportions, AFA had one phone call thanking the charity for the ad and one donation.

AFA has also made several significant grants to grass roots organisations on the mid north coast fighting to save the forests. The charity has circulated the results of the national poll we commissioned some months ago which resulted in 72% in favour of the creation of the Great Koala National Park.

AFA circulates the articles written by our co-ordinator (a professional journalist) to communities as they contain important information which is not coming out in the mainstream media.

In spite of many attempts to get scandals AFA has uncovered to the media, journalists are so narrowly focused and editorially hamstrung that the public is being denied the information.

As for politicians, we daily wonder who they serve and whether the voting public has any influence at all.



PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY



**You can donate to
Australians for Animals
through GiveNow's secure
online server or please send
your donations to:**

AUSTRALIANS FOR ANIMALS
PO BOX 414 BRUNSWICK HEADS 2483

www.givenow.com.au/koalacrisis

THE VICTORIAN FAIRY STORY

AFA almost had a momentary collapse when a colleague sent a study done by the Arthur Rylah Institute in 2020 claiming, wait for it, 400,000 koalas in the state of Victoria.

Never mind that the study isn't peer reviewed or published, or that it's based on some extraordinary methodology, or that dates of any surveys are missing, or that the study under-estimates the loss of koala habitat to the 2019-2020 bushfires, or the mortality of koalas incinerated by the fires, or the mortality rates in the eucalypt plantations, or the genetic abnormalities showing up in translocated animals.

Sigh. Not only is this study providing an irresponsible, scientifically unacceptable estimate but... and this is very serious...

At the moment, the federal Threatened Species Scientific Committee has under consideration a submission to upgrade the koala to endangered status. Koalas are currently listed as vulnerable in NSW and Queensland under the EPBC Act.

One of the reasons NSW and Queensland koalas have not been upgraded to endangered since 2012 when they were listed as vulnerable under the EPBC Act or because SA and Victorian koalas are not also listed as vulnerable - is because the federal government has continued to use the claimed status of koala populations in

Victoria as evidence that koalas are "doing fine" not only in Victoria but SA.

This latest Victorian study has the potential to see a rejection of an attempt to upgrade koalas. No decision will be made until October, 2021. At the time, the TSSC will submit a recommendation to the minister for environment who has the right to reject any recommendation.

In any event, the federal government is doing everything in its power to strip even minimal protections for our precious wildlife. State governments are following an identical path.

KEEPING SANE

If this newsletter has sent you into the doldrums, remember that animals can't speak.

It is a blessing to be their voice and right now, that voice needs to be very very loud! Do not lose heart.

*For the Animals,
Sue Arnold & Friends.*



POWERFUL OWL, A FOREST DWELLING BIRD.



PLEASE HELP SAVE THE KOALAS

www.givenow.com.au/koalacrisis



www.twitter.com/koalacrisis



www.facebook.com/koalacrisis