



Australians for Animals

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SEPTEMBER 2021 NEWSLETTER



ANY LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL?

AFA knows that everyone is desperate for some good news, some relief from the grim pandemic grind, the ongoing bad news about the plight of our wildlife. Political scandals, community wars over masks, vaccines and social distancing seem to have taken over our lives.

Sigh. It's tough. Pandemic headlines, endless news reports have consumed the news. As far as our wildlife and environment is concerned, its business as usual. The public has one focus. Will life ever return to "normal"?

AFA has been using the lockdown time to focus on our legal efforts to stop the industrial logging of remaining forests on the mid and far north coast forests, primary koala habitats.

In the process, we've had to go through parliamentary debates, second reading speeches from state and federal parliamentary sessions, state, federal and international laws, regulations, frameworks, strategies, codes, tables with hundreds of flora and fauna species, endless legal discussions with lawyers and paralegals, legal definitions, international treaties, newspaper articles, scientific journals... a very lengthy list.

We can't go into details in this newsletter but things are finally happening. One of the toughest problems in getting legal help was because of the mountain of documents which were relevant to any legal challenge. AFA's office is bursting at the seams!

But.. we now have a lot of legal help. The best way to describe the situation facing koalas can be put very simply.

There is not a single piece of legislation in any koala state or at the federal level which is capable of protecting koala habitat. Considerable efforts are being made right now by Sussan Ley, federal minister for the

environment, to get enough senators to sign off on the latest Morrison effort to hand over powers of approval for major projects to the states. If this happens the situation will further deteriorate.

And honestly? There's really no time left. Koalas simply cannot survive another catastrophic bushfire, or a prolonged drought. Many of their eucalypt species have dieback, myrtle rust, a deadly fungus is also killing many trees on which koalas depend for food and shelter.

But there is one incredible grass roots group in Victoria fighting to save the Leadbeater possum that is inspiring. AFA knows that grass roots and community groups all over the country are coming together to fight governments over environmental destruction.

What's more they're winning.

AFA has regular contact with Friends of the Leadbeater Possum, a grass roots group who made history in winning a legal challenge to stop VicForests logging possum habitat, critical to the survival of this highly endangered species. Represented by Environmental Justice Victoria, their joint efforts have been nothing short of awesome.

Right now, after the loss of one legal ground (under federal law, all breaches of state law by VicForests was upheld) by the Friends, an appeal has been launched to the High Court by Environmental Justice lawyers.

The outcome will be useful for our legal undertaking. AFA is grateful for the unstinting help given by Friends chairman. AFA is also in awe of the



Leadbeater's Possum photo by Dan Harley

effort this ongoing legal campaign has taken. The battle has been waged since 2017.

There are no quick victories against these anti-environmental governments. The David and Goliath efforts of groups taking governments to court -with few financial resources but armed with a strong sense of justice- are truly encouraging.

So there is hope. Things happen when people with good intentions come together with one focus.

AFA has always been a strong supporter and creator of community coalitions, the best recipe for raising community awareness, unity, political nous and real strength in maintaining

a healthy environment.

Although many of us feel we're living in an ego driven political and social environment, it's good to remember that in these difficult times, the real people are just quietly doing the work. Putting themselves on the line for something greater.

The Australian spirit isn't dead.



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GOVERNMENTS GASLIGHTING THE PUBLIC

Both the NSW, Queensland, Victorian and Federal governments are absolutely deaf to the public outcry over what's happening to our wildlife.

Matt Kean, NSW Environment Minister announced that “ the government has set a target of zero extinctions of native wildlife in the state's national parks estate. “. What this actually means is unclear.

According to Wikipedia, "Zero Extinction" is an ambitious goal, but science suggests that at least for vertebrate species much of the work needed to stave off many of the most predictable species losses can be accomplished through the effective conservation of a few hundred additional sites globally."

Kean's undertaking may well be more word porridge.

The likelihood of saving koalas, for example, will only happen with an end to industrial logging; the banning of major urbanisation projects in koala habitat and the creation of the Great Koala National Park.

This is the same minister who has

vowed to “ double koala numbers by 2050” even though no one knows how many koalas survived the fires. The government refuses to carry out any population estimate.

In budget hearings in the NSW Parliament, Kean claimed a population estimate of 20,000. But he was unable to give any answer as to where the number came from. Thin air.

The catastrophic fires resulted in 37% of the national park estate lost, 24% of koala habitat in eastern NSW, 54% of the Gondwana Rainforests World Heritage areas. The fires ended in March 2020.

Kean is really good at putting out



motherhood statements which in reality, are meaningless in terms of setting down policy, drawing up legislation and acting on the smooth-talking promises.

Kean, along with Deputy Premier John Barilaro are jointly responsible for the ongoing disastrous industrial logging of NSW remaining forests. It is within Kean's power to take steps to ensure protection of primary koala habitats which are being targeted and logged.

The Berejiklian government is without doubt the most anti-environmental government in the state's history. And it seems no amount of scandals, rorts, pork barrelling, environmental destruction and catastrophic mishandling of the pandemic make a dint in the arrogance of this premier.

There is simply no bandwidth for wildlife or the environment in her government save for pretty media pictures of Gladys clutching a koala.

CLIMATE CHANGE

It's almost impossible to understand why the Morrison, Victorian, NSW and Queensland governments just don't get it.

Australia is an outlier where climate change is concerned. Globally, any reputation this nation had as environmentally responsible is past history. The following information says it all:

A major court ruling in a class action brought by eight Australian teenagers challenging a proposal by Whitehaven

Coal to extend the Vickery mine, made history.

Arguing that the mine expansion would cause them injury, ill health and economic losses from emissions of carbon dioxide, Justice Mordecai Bromberg found in their favour. His judgement stated that Environment Minister Sussan Ley owed a duty of care to future generations.

In response to this historical decision, Ley has appealed against the ruling claiming she does not have a duty of care to protect children from climate harm caused by the potential mine expansion.

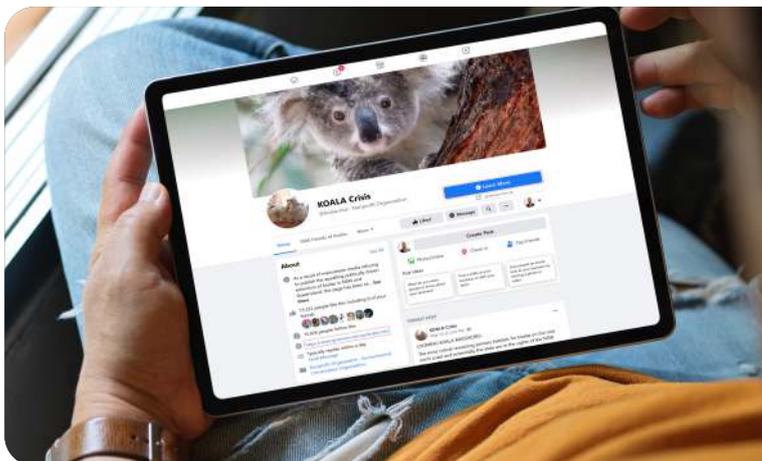
A comment from her office said: *“The Minister takes seriously her responsibilities under the act to protect the environment and in*

doing so, the interests of all Australians.”

Wrong. The act referred to is the Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act. Section 3A, principles of ecologically sustainable development include:

“the principle of inter-generation equity – that the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for future generations.”

Australia is a sitting duck for climate change impacts, shame on governments.



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FEDERAL LEVEL IS EVEN WORSE

Federal Minister for the Environment, Sussan Ley, is now pressuring independent senators to get support for her atrocious legislation, amending the EPBC Act, which will, if passed, allow state governments to approve major projects. Projects impacting wildlife and the environment on which they depend. We all know the record of state governments' approval when it comes to allowing the destruction of koala habitats.

Recently, her department produced the draft report from the Threatened Species Scientific Committee (TSSC) which is assessing whether the koala should be upgraded to endangered status under the federal EPBC Act.

A lengthy series of questions were posed by the committee with an expected response from anyone willing to make a submission. Questions which should have been asked of the koala states' governments.

Basic stuff. Critical information which governments should have undertaken and provided to the TSSC in their consideration of upgrading koalas. Imagine any responsible government refusing to carry out population estimates of an iconic, irreplaceable, unique species so severely impacted by the 2019-2020 bushfires. 61,000 koalas died or were impacted by the fires according to the federal government's own records.

In any event, even if the koala is listed as endangered it will make not a shred of difference in terms of upgrading any protection. State governments'

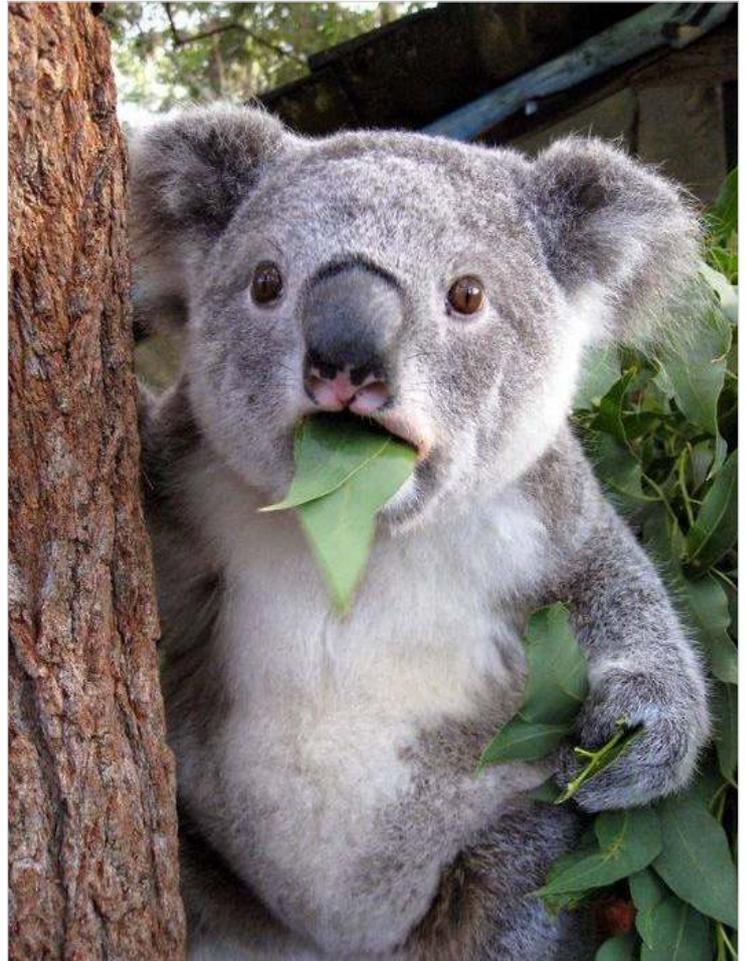
records of protection of endangered species are laughable.

Imagine adding to this already deadly mix the amended EPBC Act which would give state governments' powers of approval for major projects which lead to the next rabbit hole, "biodiversity offsets".

Here's a quick explanation from the NSW government website.

"Biodiversity offsets provide benefits to biodiversity to compensate for adverse impacts of an action. They help achieve long-term conservation outcomes while providing development proponents with the ability to undertake actions that have unavoidable impacts on biodiversity.

For example, if a proponent requires an area of native woodland to be cleared for a development to proceed, another area of similar woodland can be protected and managed for conservation in perpetuity. Over time, the gain in biodiversity achieved by improving the similar area of woodland will counterbalance the biodiversity lost due to the clearing."



An entirely ridiculous proposition. The NSW Biodiversity Offset policy is deeply unscientific.

To make matters worse, developers can offset the impacts of their projects by paying dollars to the government to make up for the damage. Money doesn't replace lost species, habitat, ecosystems.

What's happened to the offset dollars the governments have extracted is yet another financial mystery as there's a

major effort to withhold this information.

The pressures on the federal and state governments to actually do something about climate change is generating a tsunami of protest. Unfortunately, AFA doesn't believe this will result in any action by the federal government other than more spin and weasel words.

But the federal election will happen early next year!

GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

A very popular comedian, known as FriendlyJordies on social media, has a huge following.

A passionate environmentalist, Jordie is a huge hit with the younger generations who share the same love for protecting wildlife and nature.

Thanks to Jordie, well briefed by AFA on koalas, having now filmed a brilliant video calling for the creation of the Park, appealing to major corporations to donate funds which will set up an advertising campaign to lobby for the Park.

Creating the park would be the world first national park for koalas. The size

of the park would ensure that koala populations can survive in the wild in their primary habitats. The Park would provide real insurance for ensuring future populations of koalas.

For any major corporation, the creation of the park would be real win/win situation. What incredible publicity for the right corporation!

AFA is stoked that koalas have Jordie's help. We're stoked to have his generation taking on the protection of our life support systems.



<https://youtu.be/gNvKShhPK1Y>

HELPING KANGAROOS IN VICTORIA

AFA has responded to a pretty desperate situation in Victoria where the government recently approved killing more kangaroos for human consumption.

Small shelters are struggling to cope with major numbers of orphaned joeys, injured 'roos that survived shooting efforts... It's really unbelievable what's happening in that state. As usual, the small shelters are run by dedicated volunteers, working unbelievable hours with little support. The charity was able to send some decent dollars to two groups.

KABUL SMALL ANIMAL RESCUE

AFA had a plea for help from one of our dedicated supporters in touch with animal welfare groups in the UK trying desperately to get animals and staff from the shelter in the Kabul, Afghanistan's capital, on a cargo plane to the US. Funds had been raised to charter a flight.

In spite of monumental efforts, President Biden at the last minute refused to allow the animals to enter the US so they're now back in Kabul. As information is almost impossible to obtain, all we know is that animals are apparently being cared for although not in the shelter. As the Kabul airport opens, there may be a possibility of chartering a plane to take everyone out.

But its early days and so stressful for everyone involved. Westerners who founded the shelter has stayed behind with Afghan staff to ensure everyone is protected, hopefully, from the Taliban.

AFA gave a decent donation and we can only pray that a rescue operation happens soon.

Unfortunately, animals are always the last priority in these kinds of disasters, but there are many groups trying to help which is good news.

INTRODUCING CHARLIE



Life without a dog was downright impossible. We searched and searched, shelter after shelter, trying to find a rescue dog/puppy that would work with two 11 year old Burmese cats.



Fortunately, things are much better organised in shelters these days. Dogs can be taken on trial and if the relationship doesn't work, the dog can be returned and another owner found.

Our efforts were dismal failures. One dog, which the shelter folk described as a border collie cross, came home and turned into a nightmare. A big boy, supposedly at home with cats, he turned out to be a pig hunting dog. We had to return him 36 hours later as not only were the cats terrified, but so were we.

Charlie is a cavoodle. He was not the result of one of the awful breeding machines, but one of too many puppies for his mum. His adventures

with the cats have made us laugh, basically Charlie got trained by the cats and they're all now best friends.

He's also been a regular student at obedience classes and is a star. As so many people have acquired puppies/dogs during the lockdown, obedience classes are full. They are the best places to see how human behaviour really affects dogs. Spoil your dog, you're gonna have a badly behaved one.

Apart from eating toilet rolls, making gigantic messes in the office, digging holes under the fence to let the cats escape, Charlie is a joy! Life with a dog is a blessing.

Thank you all for wonderful ongoing support! For the Animals,

Sue Arnold & Friends.



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