



**Australians  
for Animals**

PROTECT • NURTURE • RESTORE

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JULY 2022 NEWSLETTER



# IS RELIEF IN SIGHT FOR WILDLIFE WITH THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT?

*Many of us breathed a sigh of relief over the outcome of the federal election. Morrison and his environment ministers have been a disaster for wildlife and the environment. The failure to seriously address the catastrophic loss of an estimated 3 billion animals in the 2019-2020 Black Summer bushfires created significant and potentially irreversible consequences for the Koala, Gliders, Birds, insects, bees, and creatures of the soil.*

At a time when the most critical response needed to be a moratorium on logging of remaining native forests; a suspension of all major urbanization and mining approvals in koala habitat while the damage to the population was assessed and emergency legislation to protect critical habitats of wildlife species severely impacted by the fires, nothing changed.

Logging continued unabated, massive urbanization projects such as Mt Gilead currently underway in southwest Sydney, slap bang in the middle of the only remaining healthy koala metapopulation in the state, were allowed to continue with the destruction.

Will things change under Labor?

Labor's shadow environment minister, Terri Butler, was truly described as "shadow" because her presence and focus on the critical

wildlife issues was basically non-existent. She lost her seat to a Green in the federal election.

Butler's portfolio was almost at the bottom of Albanese's list of portfolios when he was opposition leader. His focus on the environment has definitely not been a primary goal.

A major failing of ALL political parties during the election campaign was the quarantining of biodiversity loss. Every UN agency, coalitions of global scientists, conferences, published peer reviewed papers say the same thing.

AFA will actively lobby Tanya Plibersek, now appointed as minister for the environment.

Present indications are that at least there will be more ability for voters and public interest organisations to get to the government and be heard.



# CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY LOSS CANNOT BE SEPARATED

*Both issues are linked and as important as each other. Take the example of the koala. Identified as an umbrella species of coastal forest ecosystems, the loss of colonies leads to significant impacts for every living creature which is part of the coastal ecosystem.*

Entire ecosystems were lost in the Black Summer bushfires. Forests absorb carbon, trees make rain, they hold the soil, giving shelter and food to countless species. Some tree species will never regenerate as they were too badly burnt thus removing more habitat for forest animals.

Yet it's almost impossible to find any focus on the terrible plight of our

wildlife struggling to survive with no adequate legal protection at the state or federal level.

Addressing climate change is critical. But divorcing biodiversity loss and the impacts of climate change on the life support systems of ALL living creatures (creatures which help provide the foundations of life) is completely unacceptable.



# AFA IS COMPLETELY APOLITICAL

*The only issue this long-standing wildlife charity is interested in is the fate of terrestrial and marine animals. There's no doubt that we are in the midst of the sixth great extinction. The sheer volume of scientific information on the ongoing loss of our life support systems should be cause for alarm and action.*

AFA will continue to call out political parties. There's an absence of voices for our wildlife in Canberra, Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide and WA. The Greens have focused on climate change with policies that do not go to the heart of major issues facing biodiversity at the political level.

A priority must be reversing or adding provisions to the Common Assessment Method, a memorandum of understanding that Greg Hunt, then environment minister, drew up in 2015.

This CAM as it's known, was signed off by all state governments. The assessment allows ONE only national listing of a species. No regional or local areas can be listed, protection is virtually stripped from any regional species in trouble.

The Federal Government's actions are entirely contradicted by its own EPBC legislation.

According to the Department of the Environment's [Species Profile and Threats Data Base](#):

*'The definition of a species under the EPBC Act includes sub-species and distinct populations that the Minister has determined to be species for the purposes of the Act.'*

State governments can list a species separately in that state but there is no provision for any legal challenge to force that action.

Yes, Sussan Ley downgraded the koala to endangered status under the provisions of the EPBC Act in NSW, Queensland and the ACT. But.... She didn't use the CAM process, her decision was based on a provision in the EPBC Act which had only been

used once before.

No public interest legal challenge can force the federal environment minister to use that provision.

At the federal level, the extent of protection offered by endangered listing can only be described as pathetic. There's no real change from the information and non-mandatory requirements of the federal Koala Referral Guidelines which have now disappeared.

Developers can still self-refer their projects to the federal government, there's no obligation or mandatory requirement. Developers can commission their own environmental consultants and refuse to allow any independent analysis or review.

AFA met with Labor's Tony Burke some time ago to seek Labor's agreement to rescind the CAM. However Burke gave no assurances that anything would change.

On Labor's website, the policy details are not spelled out in any detail. Labor will:

- Work with States and Territories on a national koala conservation strategy.
- Expand koala hospitals and services and invest in koala chlamydia vaccines and fertility projects.
- Boost protection for native species and combat invasive species including by investing:
- \$24.5 million for koala conservation programs.

Hospitals are already very well-funded, not just from state and federal government grants but from funds donated during the bushfires.



No one asks where surviving koalas will be released or whether any release site is permanently protected and large enough to allow the population to grow.

Chlamydia. Sigh.. Any wildlife carer involved with koalas and chlamydia will tell you that this awful condition is caused by stress from loss of habitat. Stress impacts the immune system lowering the koalas' ability to resist infection.

Moderately sick koalas have recovered when placed in a healthy

forest. In any event there's no practical way wild populations can be vaccinated and in spite of millions and millions of dollars in grants, there is no vaccine. Just a lot of experiments.

Fertility projects? Artificial insemination? A complete contradiction of natural selection and reproduction.

ANY policy is okay it seems as long as habitat protection and a moratorium on logging native forests in all koala states are not on the political agenda.



**PLEASE HELP  
SAVE  
THE KOALAS**

[www.givenow.com.au/koalacrisis](http://www.givenow.com.au/koalacrisis)



# LEGAL CHALLENGE OVER FORESTRY

**Governments have taken every possible step to deny any public interest challenges. BUT, there are two actions happening which are long shots. One is being mounted by the North East Forest Alliance against the federal government for failing to consider climate impacts on biodiversity relying on out-dated scientific information. This action is focused on the Regional Forest Agreements and is likely to take a long time before it gets to court.**

AFA has provided funds to help the Indigenous Justice Action Network launch legal challenges over several harvesting plans. The outcome will be very informative.

In the meantime, AFA's legal team ( we are very fortunate in having an excellent lawyer and senior counsel) are focused on the big picture. The Forestry Corporation NSW has just signed off on a five year contractual arrangement to supply wood to contractors.

This agreement is really the nail in the coffin as a five year agreement takes no account of threats including increased impacts of climate change or floods.

AFA can't include the details of our current legal focus for obvious reasons but after nearly two and a half years of intense research involving the EDO, barristers, senior counsels, top scientists, commissioned advices, endless research and on-site visits, we're waiting once again for senior counsel's advice.

The endless time it has taken is the best evidence AFA can produce of the failure of our democratic rights at the state and federal level. It's almost incomprehensible to see the lengths governments have gone to ensure there can be no legal challenges to stop the industrial logging of our forests.



One thing AFA is well known for is endurance. When the going gets tough, AFA gets tougher. Together with our legal team, we will continue the work. We will keep you posted but please know that funds raised on this

issue are being well spent on ensuring we have the best possible advice and guidance.

It is vitally important that our focus is on the big picture as we really have a wildlife crisis in remaining forests.

## NSW's DISMAL NEW GOV'T

**Wildlife in NSW is unlikely to get a break with Perrottet taking over from Berejiklian.**

Expert after expert are wringing their hands over the ongoing appalling loss of forest dwelling wildlife, particularly Koalas, Gliders, and so many other species facing localised and state wide extinction.

The change of leadership in the NSW government has not resulted in any environmental focus by Perrottet or his treasurer, former environment minister Matt Kean.

Kean has been a spectacular disappointment in his role as environmental minister attempting to portray himself as a guardian of koalas whilst at the same time refusing to take any steps to stop logging of primary koala habitats in remaining native forests. An action he could take legally. Or to uphold the promises he made about southwest Sydney koalas.

A week or so ago both Labor and LNP government voted against a bill introduced in the state's upper house to create the Great Koala National



Park on NSW's mid-north coast. The vote was 30 to 7, an appalling outcome.

When Luke Foley was Labor's opposition leader some years ago he promised to create the Park which would guarantee a core metapopulation of koalas would survive with over 350,000 hectares of forest protected.

Apparently current NSW Labor party has no such focus.

## QUEENSLAND AND NSW FORCED TO ACT

**Queensland and NSW governments followed the federal action and listed the koala under state legislation as endangered.**

However, it hasn't changed anything. Koala habitat continues to be destroyed. The situation in southwest Sydney is nothing short of a catastrophe with major urbanization projects bulldozing koala trees, failing to provide corridors and connectivity which would allow koalas to move from immediate threats.

Ditto in Queensland, destruction of habitat continues unabated as the government continues to approve major urbanization projects.

## GROWTH AND GREED

**Australia's current economic future is focused on growth and greed. Major political parties want a population of 50 million by 2050. This ancient continent has already overstepped its carrying capacity.**

Growth means logging forests for timber, burning forests for energy, wiping out our unique, iconic wildlife, leaving the country extremely vulnerable to intense climate change impacts including drought, bushfires and flood.

Population growth is an issue that major conservation groups continue to avoid, to the very serious detriment of biodiversity.

# WILDLIFE IS IN REAL TROUBLE

*A phone call with a Victorian wildlife carer has demonstrated a terrible situation for carers in that state. Kangaroos and wallabies are regarded by some as pests, so running them over, shooting and maiming is fun. Many shelters are apparently struggling to cope with abandoned, injured joeys, dying badly injured mothers, and the sheer volume of wildlife being brought in for treatment.*

The Victorian government recently published a long overdue strategy for koalas. The strategy claims an incredible 450,000 koalas in the state. AFA checked out the estimate with a koala expert scientist who dismissed the methodology.

The draft strategy is focused on: traditional owners and koalas, koala over-abundance, rehabilitation, genetics, disease... ANYTHING except ending the dreadful injuries and mortality caused when eucalypt plantations are "harvested". The plantations are a disaster for koalas and the injuries sustained are nothing short of horrific. The strategy indicates a huge increase in these plantations with no acceptable

protection for koalas.

Unfortunately, the Andrews government is no friend of wildlife. Nor is Queensland premier Antastasia Palaszczuk.

There's never been a more urgent need for an audit of all the taxpayer funds which governments have provided with grants in their millions for koalas and other wildlife. No results are provided and no proper auditing has ever been undertaken.

Parliamentary inquiries with independent committees (now possible federally with all the Teal Mps) would provide a real exposure of how the policies of state and federal governments have focused on creating conditions for extinction.



Image source: [www.warriors4wildlife.org](http://www.warriors4wildlife.org)

## MEANTIME...

AFA has continually responded to small shelters seeking urgent help after the flooding. We supported feeding pets living with their humans now in tents and inadequate shelters. So many homeless people badly let down by the NSW government.

AFA appreciates these are difficult financial times with inflation and a

possible recession.

But we need funds to continue with the forest legal effort and to support the ongoing needs of small shelters who are usually paying for the food and medicines, crates, containers out of their own pockets.

Without these incredible people, our wildlife would be in deeper trouble.

## A QUICK CHARLIE STORY

*As home has a hot tub in the garden, it's always been a favourite place for Rainy Cat who likes to leave his tail soaking in the warm water.*



But on one freezing morning after a swim in the ocean, Sue was basking in the warm water admiring the clouds. Suddenly a huge splash.

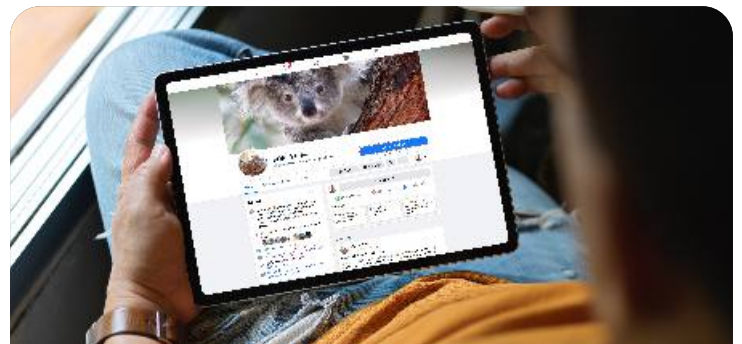
Charlie had jumped into the tub, now soaked and trying to swim. All

those tales about poodles and cavoodles being water dogs, didn't include Charlie who is definitely not in

the club. The back door is now firmly shut.

His relationship with the cats is so sweet. Just seeing different species, traditional enemies lie down together gives hope that one day humanity will find peace with itself and the natural world.

*For the Animals.*



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