



Australians for Animals

PROTECT • NURTURE • RESTORE

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ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMIT NEEDED

AFA realizes it's vitally important to get the economy going again after the devastating impacts of the pandemic. So many people and businesses have suffered. But the recent Job Summit gave cause for concern.

The new federal government wants to up immigration numbers to 195,000 with the real possibility this will be a permanent annual number.

This figure doesn't take into account international students, refugees or temporary workers. Clearly, an increase of this magnitude is going to have major impacts on the environment.

Yet no environmental scientists, NGOs, were invited to the Job Summit.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence, the Australian Council of Social Service, The Y Australia and National Seniors Australia were the only NGOs who were invited.

With already significant demands on native forests as a result of many houses, businesses needing to be rebuilt after the floods, a growth in population of this size means more big urbanization projects.

Houses need to be built, suburbs, schools, roads, hospitals, shopping centres. Timber is needed for construction and the current number of eucalypt plantations cannot meet the demand.

Native animals, birds, possums etc. NEED HOMES TOO if they are to survive and reproduce. For some time now the NSW Forestry Corporation has been designating native forests as "plantations"



which allows the natural native forest to be bulldozed and plantations planted.

A recent report from a Senate Committee focused on climate change legislation failed to recommend prohibiting burning native forests as "renewable energy".

The sheer desecration of the state forests in NSW, Queensland and Victoria is mind-boggling.

Forest wildlife are facing increasing threats to their survival as habitat disappears, leaving them with no place to go. Refugees in their own country.

KOALAS IN DESPERATE STRAITS

Not only are remaining koala hubs in NSW state forests being logged, but in south west Sydney, the destruction of koala habitat is beyond heart-breaking. Campbelltown's koala population is being systematically wiped out.

Victorian forest groups report the same level of destruction. The Queensland government's ongoing battle to eradicate koalas is well underway.

We are witnessing the most diabolical lack of protection of koalas by the NSW state government.

Neither Perrottet, Palacyszuk, or Andrews have the environment and the appalling loss of species on their policy agenda. Victoria's draft koala plan can only be described as a waste of paper.

Legislation in NSW makes protests illegal with fines of up to \$20,000 and 2 years in prison.

In NSW, one of the reasons for the seemingly endless effort to mount a legal challenge to stop the industrial

logging is because the Forestry Act prohibits any public citizen legal challenge.

So much for democracy. AFA has no indication that there will be any change under Labor if it wins the state election in February.

AFA predicts it's only a matter of time before native forests will be given approval, by governments, to be burnt for "renewable energy".

Let's not leave out mining, infrastructure, highways. Without protection of remaining habitat, no koala national parks or climate refugia, there's no future for koalas. Koalas are being wiped out in the name of "progress".

A vital fact that continues to be ignored by politicians, governments

and conservation organisations is that in destroying koala habitat, significant biodiversity is also lost.

The National Koala Recovery Plan (more about this later in the Bulletin) says:

"A preliminary analysis conducted in 2021 estimated how many fauna species overlapped in their distribution with the listed Koala by

at least 25% and would likely benefit also from habitat retention and restoration or fire management directed towards the listed Koala."

In plain language, the death toll from wiping out the koala and their habitat includes, possums, gliders, birds, insects, and a host of species that contribute to survival of the ecosystem.



Appin Road where massive Southwest Sydney urbanisation projects are happening without overpasses or underpasses

NATIONAL KOALA RECOVERY PLAN **NEEDS THE DUSTBIN**

AFA has had a brief look at the 136 page document which appears to have been approved by the former LNP Environment Minister, Sussan Ley, released in April, 2022.

It's not difficult to do a quick evaluation with the search function on computers. The "over-arching threats to koalas" are identified as "land use change" and climate change.

The purpose of this plan is to provide for the research and management actions necessary to stop the decline of, and support the recovery of, the listed Koala so that the chances of its long-term survival in nature are maximised. It is the road map to recovery.

Words, words, words. The real threats are downplayed. This is the Plan's description of industrial logging.. "modification of natural systems that includes vegetation change through forest harvesting".

Plus the Plan is all for translocation.

We all know how koalas get in the way of projects. Best way to deal with them is medicate, move and leave to mother nature. The translocation success rate is appalling. Koala joeys learn the secret of their mother's diet by licking her caecum. This behaviour lets the joeys know which eucalypt species to eat.

Koala populations live in colonies, in local ecosystems which allow them to spread their habitat.

Not only are they not adapted to new species of eucalypts, but there's good evidence koalas are territorial so being driven out of their homes, they die.

They die from stress, starvation, disease, dog attacks and vehicle strike.



THE MIRACLE OF NATURE

In nature, everything is connected. The koala has been described by government and scientists as an "umbrella species for coastal forest ecosystems". This means that the existence of the koala is a key component of a healthy forest ecosystem.

If any species, like the koala, is removed, the ecosystem may collapse or drastically change. In a February 2021 article in The Conversation, scientists found that 19 Australian ecosystems met their criteria to be classified as "collapsing". Their report indicates a potentially irreversible change to ecosystem structure, composition and functioning, imperilling biodiversity, human health and well-being.

The report found that ecosystems were rapidly deteriorating globally and species extinction rates are strongly correlated to both climate change and human footprint.

Yet the fact that humanity cannot exist without a healthy environment continues to be politically irrelevant. Without a healthy environment, the national and states' economies will suffer irreversible declines.

Climate change is big on the political



Australian active forest destruction (Stock Image)

agenda BUT no one talks about biodiversity loss which is equally serious. Mainstream media simply ignores the issue. That fact was no more obvious than in the Sydney

Morning Herald's recent article on PM Albanese's first 100 days.

The article detailed ten major priorities. Biodiversity loss wasn't mentioned.



PLEASE HELP SAVE THE KOALAS

www.givenow.com.au/koalacrisis

SOLUTIONS ARE SIMPLE

There's absolutely no need for a 136 page document. The ways to ensure koala survival are:

- Legally protect remaining habitat (can only be done at the state level).
- Stop any logging in koala hubs in native forests. (state)
- Create the Great Koala National Park in NSW.
- Prohibit any urban developments in koala habitat. (state)
- Prohibit developers being able to "self refer" developments to the federal government for approval.
- Prohibit developers submitting koala management plans.
- Legislate for independent, qualified koala scientists to draw up koala management plans for developments and forestry.
- Remove the forestry industries' exemption from the environmental protection provisions of the federal Environmental Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC).
- Revoke the Common Assessment Method (CAM) created by Greg Hunt when he was Environment Minister. The CAM does not allow any regional protection or local protection of koalas.



The likelihood of these actions being undertaken are not an optimistic one. Not when the federal government is planning ongoing major increases in immigration. Native forests will continue to be the focus of the forestry, timber, building, construction, woodchip, "renewable energy" industries.

In summary, the National Koala Recovery Plan is a useless document.

AFA will make a formal request to the new Minister for the

Environment, Tanya Plibersek to revoke the Plan.

AFA will be requesting a new plan focused on legal protection of remaining habitat and the inclusion of the EPBC environmental protection provisions in all commonwealth/state forestry agreements.

It's critically important to revoke the CAM so that regional and local populations' habitat can be legally protected.

THIS IS WHY WE NEED AN ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMIT

The new Minister for the Environment said it all in a recent speech:

"Australia's environment is bad and getting worse, as this report shows, and much of the destruction outlined in the State of the Environment report will take years to turn around."

Her speech didn't mention harm to biodiversity by climate change, or how preventing harm could be incorporated into the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act, which has no provisions dealing with climate change.

Nor was there any mention of prohibiting developers from self-referring projects for approval by the federal government, (if the development is likely harm the koala).

What's really needed is a federal Royal Commission into the politically driven policies of harm approved by federal and state governments which are driving the koala to



The 'Black Summer' bush fires.

extinction. An in-depth examination of why laws were changed to ensure no legal challenges, why koala management plans approved by governments are incapable of protecting the species.

AFA has been focused on the impacts of the 2019-2020 bushfires to fauna, flora, freshwater fish, riparian zones, soil erosion and the depth of damage to native forests.

There's an urgent need to address the state of remaining native forests in all states. We need to understand the full extent of threats facing surviving biodiversity including the inter-connections.

COLLAPSING ECOSYSTEMS

The list of 19 collapsing ecosystems includes the Great Barrier Reef, Australia's kelp and alpine ash forests, Shark Bay. Alpine Ash forests are particularly important as almost all the industrial logging of these forests on the south coast of NSW is in these forests which stretch to Victoria.

Severe and ongoing wildfires inhibit these forests from regenerating. Many scientists believe these forests are on their way to extinction. Along with the demise of these precious forests will be yellow belly gliders, greater gliders, Leadbeater possums and countless forest species reliant on ash forest habitats.

It's worth repeating two statements made by the scientists who did the research on 19 collapsing ecosystems.

"In what may be the most comprehensive evaluation of the environmental state of play in Australia, we show major and iconic ecosystems are collapsing across the continent and into Antarctica. These systems sustain life.

We define collapse as the state where ecosystems have changed in a substantial, negative way from their



Shark Bay, World Heritage Site, Western Australia.

original state – such as species or habitat loss, or reduced vegetation or coral cover – and are unlikely to recover.

Our lives and those of our children, as well as our economies, societies and cultures, depend on it."

After the fires, scientists estimated that some forest fauna could take up to 50 years to recover but this information was collectively ignored by state and federal governments.

DEADLY DECISION MARINE ENVIRONMENT

The recent approval of 47,000 km2 of ocean waters for seismic exploration for oil and gas is a potential disaster for cetaceans, crustaceans, turtles, fish larvae, fish and all marine life.

AFA has a great deal of expertise in seismic exploration in the marine environment. It's an issue we've fought tirelessly at the federal and international level.

The California Gray Whale Coalition, which was created by AFA, held a major scientific workshop with one of the most respected public interest law firms in San Francisco several years ago focused entirely on seismic damage.

Some of the best experts on ocean noise, together with commercial

and recreational fishermen came to the workshop.

AFA served on a special federal government committee set up to investigate seismic exploration. Our Co-ordinator has presented papers at major scientific conferences and at industry conferences.

Seismic noise can cause haemorrhaging of lungs and ears in whales and dolphins.

Noise can cause deafness and inability to communicate.



QUEENSLAND MINES IN THE PIPELINE

Potentially adding

55.8 MILLION TONNES
of carbon to the Earth's atmosphere

According to a government report released in March, 34 proposed Queensland coal projects or expansions are in the pipeline.

If the 34 projects proceed, they would add a total of 855.8 million tonnes of carbon to the Earth's atmosphere - 70% more than Australia's total greenhouse emissions in this year up to September.

THE SEEMINGLY ENDLESS LEGAL PURSUIT

AFA now has the expertise of a skilled Victorian barrister who has won substantial victories against the forest industry in that state.

Our team has a real level of expertise but identifying a potential challenge that results in a really significant outcome is a mountain of complexities both environmental and legal.

All AFA can say at this point is that the legal effort is definitely on the boil and will be pursued until we get there. It's very clear the reason why no substantive legal action has happened focused on stopping appalling industrial logging (which continued during the fires) is because the legal tangle is full of knots which are extremely difficult to unpick.

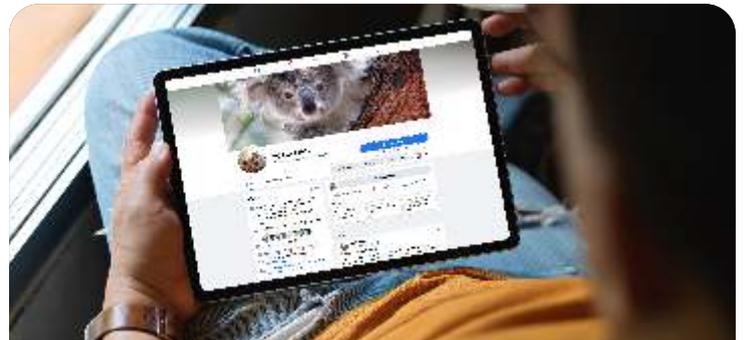
Nothing is easy or simple in these times. The survival of so many of Australia's unique, iconic species is on the line.

AFA will be making a formal request to Minister Plibersek to hold an environmental summit.

Spread the word!

You can email Minister.Plibersek@dceew.gov.au and ask her to organise an environmental summit.

*For the Animals,
Sue Arnold & Friends.*



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