



Australians for Animals

PROTECT • NURTURE • RESTORE

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DECEMBER 2022 NEWSLETTER



WILL OUR WILDLIFE HAVE BETTER OPTIONS IN 2023

Some good news is always the best way to start a newsletter! First off, AFA needs to explain what we've set in motion. Unfortunately, we have to give you the necessary background. But this background will also help you understand why the situation for wildlife, particularly Koalas, Greater Glider and Yellow-bellied Glider is critical. And why there has to be a moratorium on industrial logging in NSW native forests.

The current industrial logging happening in NSW native forests is carried out under the conditions of approval set down in the Coastal Forest Integrated Operations Approval (CIFOA).

The CIFOA was signed off in November 2018 by the then Minister for Environment Gabrielle Upton, and then Minister for Lands and Forestry, Paul Toole.

Since November 2018, the state suffered horrific bushfires in 2019-2020 preceded by a three year drought. Scientists have been adamant that these extremes, and the intensity of the fires were the result of climate change impacts.

THESE ARE HORRIFIC FIGURES

More than 3 billion animals were estimated to have died in the bushfire affected states.

A breakdown of 3 billion demonstrates the extent of the catastrophe:

- 143 million mammals
- 2.46 billion reptiles
- 180 million birds
- 51 billion frogs
- As many as 14,736 koalas were affected. (this figure has grown to 60,000).

More than 1 million hectares of the NSW south coast was burnt, 60% high or very high severity. Around 80% of the native forest destined for timber production was burnt.

Yet no action has been taken by the Coalition government to make

critical changes that would ensure the survival of remaining forest wildlife.

The NSW government has spent a helluva lot of time, money and effort in ensuring that there is no way any of the conditions can be changed unless the two Ministers responsible for the CIFOA make those changes.

Up until Berejiklian's sacking, the NSW Environment Minister was Matt Kean, and the Minister representing forestry, then deputy premier and leader of the national party, John Barilaro.

A report by Dr Andrew Smith, a leading ecologist, commissioned and published by the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) in September 2020, found alarming evidence of many species facing dire consequences of the fires and a continuation of logging.

Dr Smith advised recovery times for Koalas, Greater Gliders and the Yellow Bellied Glider, would take from 20-120 years. Dr Smith wrote "fauna populations surviving in fire refuges in state forests are at risk of elimination by timber harvesting under the normal CIFOA conditions which would prevent recovery, and cause catastrophic declines in these species."

He also called for a significant reduction in logging so that these species can recover.

There was no response by Kean or Barilaro to this damning report which raised incredibly serious issues. Remember that the fires were described as a "global environmental disaster." Thousands



and thousands of koalas were incinerated.

Not one word was spoken by Kean about the need to change CIFOA conditions so that a significant number of forest species had time to recover. No response to the fact that at least 8,000 koalas had perished on the mid north coast as a result of the fires.

WHY THE CIFOA HAS TO CHANGE

Critical issues causing ongoing current huge concerns are the cascading impacts of the 2019-2020 bushfires on fauna, flora, invertebrates, riparian zones, soil, aquatic species and a particular species of eucalypt favoured by the construction industry.

AFA has been researching the impacts of industrial logging, fires,

and climate change since the fires. Prior to the fires, a three year drought caused major problems for koalas and other forest dependent species. Finding the right place to get any government attention has occupied the charity for some time.

The NSW Environment Protection Agency (EPA) is responsible for monitoring the logging carried out by the Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW). The EPA also has the ability to conduct a comprehensive review of the CIFOA.

However, the Agency can't be forced by legal action to carry out a comprehensive review of CIFOA. BUT, our team believed it might be possible to persuade the EPA to voluntarily agree to undertake a review if there was sufficient pressure. And that pressure could only come from the scientific community.

PUTTING TOGETHER THE BIG PICTURE

AFA has an excellent history with many scientists both within Australia and internationally as the charity relies on their expertise in ensuring our campaigns are based on peer reviewed published scientific expertise.

With the help of several scientists, AFA has put together a sign on letter addressed to the CEO of the EPA from national and international scientists requesting a comprehensive review of the cascading impacts of the fires and climate change.

The request is supported by a background brief which summarises the damage and long term catastrophic impacts to every component of native forest ecosystems. In other words, AFA put together the big picture, an effort that has not been undertaken by the scientific or environmental communities. Most scientists concentrate on their speciality, similarly conservation groups tend to focus on one or more species, like the koala.

Putting together the big picture is of critical importance. A healthy forest ecosystem is made up of many different components. If one component is knocked out, the entire ecosystem will be affected.

The factual details in the brief are very concerning. In fact, they're shocking.

2019-2020 BUSHFIRE DAMAGE

These are some of the facts:

The bushfires burnt an estimated 42% of all state forests.

The impacts include:

- Loss of ecological integrity
- Loss of ecosystem capacity and services
- Loss of biodiversity
- Loss of plant species and habitat
- Loss of invertebrates
- Loss of vertebrate species and habitat.
- Loss of aquatic biodiversity
- Loss and degradation of riparian zones
- Catastrophic soil loss with erosion impacts

There's a serious risk of recovery for 595 species of flora. Massive soil loss has triggered erosion events. Soils take a very long time to recover. Typically in NSW the rate is about one centimetre every thousand years!

Scientists estimate 19 ecosystems have collapsed and are unlikely to recover.



THE GOOD NEWS FANTASTIC RESPONSES

AFA has been grateful for the amazing response from some of the best and most recognised national and international scientists.

We are still gathering more signatures and waiting for the right time to do the job – sending the request with the brief and signatures.

One of the reasons the charity is delaying sending the request is because of the looming 'silly season'

when government essentially closes down.

Given that the NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet claims he's going to campaign on his government's "environmental record", the most appropriate time to lodge the request will be early next year.

PERROTTET IS A KOALA DISASTER

The evidence of an extraordinary level of koalas loss is overwhelming. Forestry alone is wiping out koala hubs in the north and south coast forests.

Then there's the massive urbanisation project at Mt Gilead in southwestern Sydney - where koalas are dying as habitat is being bulldozed.

If the habitat loss doesn't get them, then cars and trucks will as there are no overhead or underpass connectors for koalas or wildlife.

The Western Sydney LGA estimated resident population for 2021 is 2,620,162. In 2016, it was estimated at 1,081,070. Massive urban

projects are being constructed or projected to be built to accommodate a major planned population increase in the region.

Perrottet actually claimed earlier this month that:

"We have the strongest record on environment anywhere in the country. Our policies in relation to climate change, emission reduction, national parks, we have led the country on these policies."



Protesters at the site of the Figtree Hill construction site in January Image: Facebook group Save Mount Gilead Inc

PERROTTET'S HISTORY

It was only a couple of weeks ago when the national party's agricultural minister introduced legislation which would strip councils of their ability to regulate private logging, extending private forestry approvals from 15 years to 30.

Farm forestry plans would be overseen by the [Local Land Services \(LLS\)](#).

Saunders proudly proclaimed his explanation for the legislation's impact on koalas by describing the species 'as being used as a convenient political tool by government's critics.'

He described the new codes "that we've brought in actually do more to protect koalas."

Presumably Saunders was referring to the revised [state environmental planning policy \(koala habitat protection\)](#) which commenced in March, 2021. The koala SEPP, as it's known, stripped more protection from koalas.

Basically, the national party driven koala SEPP changes ensured there was no prohibition on the clearing of koala habitat. Core koala habitat was not sacrosanct.

In spite of major protests from conservation organisations, community groups and the public, the changes were rammed through. This SEPP began the infamous koala war.

On gaining the premiership in 2019, one of former coalition premier 'Gladys Berejiklians' first actions was to disband the [office of environment and heritage](#) (OEH), effectively leaving NSW as the only state without a department of the environment. The rot had set in.

In 2019, Perrottet refused to back away from [a comment](#) he made in 2015 that climate change measures have been a "gratuitous waste" of taxpayer money.

"Another example of gratuitous waste is the almost religious devotion of the political left to climate change" he said in a video address to the [center for independent studies](#).

In April, Perrottet vowed to 'throw the book' at climate protestors with penalties including two years in jail and \$20,000 fines.

As far as koalas are concerned, Perrottet has no record that demonstrates the slightest concern.

Thanks to [Reverend Fred Nile](#), the draft legislation on opening up private forestry with the Local Land Services legislation is now dead, leaving Perrottet with an humiliating defeat.

His anti-environmental credentials exposed with a state election in March. Any win by the coalition government would be a disaster for not only koalas but the state's wildlife species.

[Claiming](#) that the latest death knell threat to koalas "has been supported unanimously in the cabinet room", Perrottet said:



"it showed the government working together in coalition that balances the needs to provide farmers with support for renewable farming efforts, at the same time protecting koalas' natural habitat."

Given that the [federal government declared koalas endangered](#) in NSW, Queensland and the ACT in February, blaming the decline in numbers due to land clearing and catastrophic bushfires shrinking its habitat, the ongoing efforts by the NSW coalition government to eradicate the koala can only be described as totally irresponsible.

Australia cannot afford to install politicians into state or federal governments who demonstrate such colossal contempt of an iconic, irreplaceable species.

The public has demonstrated over and over again that koala survival matters.

March can't come soon enough for many NSW voters.

MORE EVIDENCE

In June, 2021, the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) provided the NSW government with its report on the damage to CIFOA forests as a result of the bushfires in 2019-2020.

The government has continued to ensure the report is not made publicly available and it can't be accessed either under any Freedom of Information legislation. Little wonder!

The report was leaked by the Guardian, demonstrating an appalling decline of forest fauna. Forests identified as extreme and high risk forests were the focus of recommendations to stop logging for up to three years. "there is a risk of serious and irreversible harm to environmental values from the cumulative impacts of fire and harvesting".

Government response? Logging continued in the extreme and high risk forests. The secret report remains a secret report.



PLEASE HELP SAVE THE KOALAS

www.givenow.com.au/koalacrisis

THE NSW LABOR PARTY DOES IT HAVE A POLICY ON KOALAS?

AFA searched and searched. The best we could find was a November tweet from Chris Minns, leader of the ALP, in relation to the proposed legislation that Rev.Nile forced Perrottet to ditch, saying: "I'll be clear – I don't support the Liberals and Nationals law to allow mass clearing of critical koala habitat across our state."

"Koalas are already on track to be extinct by 2050, all that Dominic Perrottet's plan will do is speed it up."

Another statement we found from May, just after the former federal government declared the koala endangered in NSW, Queensland and the ACT.

"It has just been revealed that after 12 yrs of neglect - koalas are now endangered."

Make no mistake, mass land clearing, cuts to National Park funding and ignoring the experts has led to this.

And to make it even worse, Dominic Perrottet tried to hide it.

Burying this news in a report released on the eve of the federal election.

This iconic animal is closer to extinction than ever before.

We must do everything we can to ensure that koalas in NSW survive in the wild."

We all agree Chris Minns, but what exactly are you going to do about it? Where's your policies?"



HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL



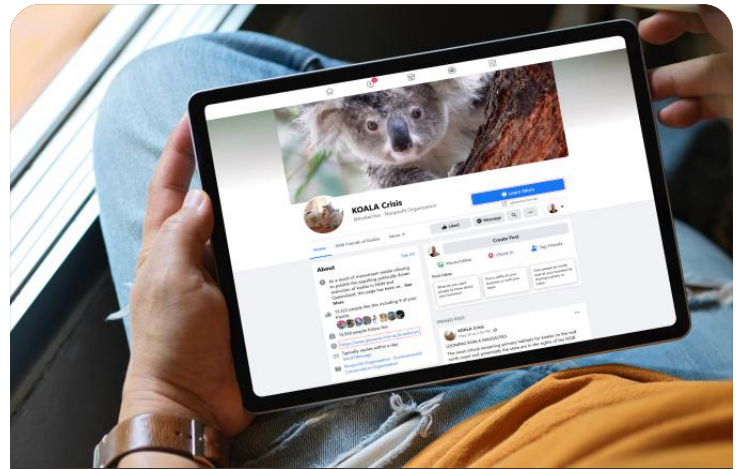
Dear precious people who have supported AFA through thick and thin as we continue the battle for our wildlife.

It is not an easy battle with so many barriers legally and with mainstream media now in the hands of Murdoch/News Ltd and the banks.

But AFA continues its important

work. Work that could not be made without your kind, generous and compassionate support. Blessings to you all. Thank you so much.

Sue Arnold & Friends.



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