



Australians for Animals

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JULY 2023 NEWSLETTER



GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK MUST BECOME A REALITY

Unless the NSW Labour government abides by its election promise to create the Great Koala National Park, the state's koala population is doomed.

That's the cold hard reality facing this iconic, unique, irreplaceable species. Right now, the government is refusing to place a moratorium on logging in the park area, the only way to ensure koala survival in NSW.

Remember Australia was once home to millions of koalas. Now we're down to a few thousands on the East Coast with localised extinctions becoming regular events.. No one can say with any authority how many koalas are left, but the existing acceptable surveys, which are not current, demonstrate a catastrophic situation. Everywhere.

We have no idea how many koalas are left in Victoria and South Australia. Victoria's estimate of over 400,000 has to be taken with a large grain of salt. Plantations and

bushfires wiped out thousands of koalas. Many are showing signs of genetic disorders.

Local campaigners living in the proposed Great Koala National Park are appalled at the failure of the new government to act. Here's a list of 20 state forests designated for logging.

State forests destined for the chop include Clouds Creek, Ellis, Thumb Creek, Bagawa, Boambee, Collombat and Conglomerate, state forests which are all part of the proposed park.

AFA has compiled a list of harvest plans of state forests (the plans allow logging) with identified koala habitat from 2019 to the present day. The list is eleven pages long. Almost every harvest plan involves a koala hub, a precious, irreplaceable habitat.

The National Koala Recovery Plan (yet more paper policy) makes it very clear what the outcome of continued destruction of habitat will be.

"Extinction debt whereby the local loss of Koala populations after habitat loss has tipped over the threshold for long-term persistence, can take up to 100 years to manifest itself".

People are feeling disempowered. It doesn't seem to matter which political party is in power in NSW, the ongoing destruction of koalas and native forests continues.

As usual these days, contacting Ministers, politicians, media, big conservation groups, is difficult.

The only way to contact Penny Sharpe, NSW Environment Minister ,responsible for the Park's creation, is to fill in the contact form with a strong message. Here is the link <https://www.nsw.gov.au/nsw-government/ministers/minister-environment-heritage>.



AFA suggests you send a simple message. *"Minister, your government promised to establish the Great Koala National Park. Your failure to impose a moratorium and allow logging makes a mockery of Labour's promise and ensures an ongoing lack of trust in governments and politicians. NSW koalas need the park to survive."*

DOING THE HARD YARDS

AFA has been busy organising conference calls with the CEO of the NSW Environment Protection Agency – EPA has responsibility for compliance of native forest logging undertaken by the Forestry Corporation. Plus a host of other responsibilities including wildlife protection of forest species which is woefully inadequate.

A scientific submission prepared by AFA and signed by 31 national and international scientists calling on the EPA to conduct a comprehensive review of the Coastal Integrated Forestry Approval (CIFOA) which controls logging or native forests has had a result.

An email from the CEO resulted in a lengthy, useful phone call with our co-ordinator.

Communication has been established. AFA was invited to set up a conference with the CEO to discuss some of the issues raised in the scientific submission.

Our first conference included three scientists with expertise on flora,

and fauna together with a scientist who was an expert witness in the legal victories by the Environmental Justice and local conservation groups in Victoria against VicForests.

We raised significant issues.

The CIFOA approval was signed in November, 2018 and hasn't been updated since. Climate change impacts such as the Black Summer bushfires and the previous 3 year drought are not covered by the approval. All requests by conservation groups and scientists to update the CIFOA by including climate change impacts have been met with complete disregard by both Coalition and Labour governments.

Koalas were declared endangered last year. What has the NSW government done to upgrade koalas protection? **Nothing.** Forestry Corporation's Koala Code of Practice hasn't been updated since 2014. Logging of koala habitats continues unabated.

A precedent is being set. Designating any wildlife species as endangered results in no changes, destruction of habitat and loss continues.

To give you some idea of how bad things are, AFA compiled a list of all the harvest plans since 2019 to present day that involved logging of koala habitat by the forestry industry. The number of harvest plans filled eleven pages !

Other endangered and critically endangered wildlife receive no protection under the CIFOA conditions. The fauna specialist at the EPA conference spoke about the lack of tree hollows for so many dependent species urgently needed because of the sheer amount of loss of trees with hollows in the bushfires.

We have another long conference call organised in a few weeks. BUT..



where will the discussions go? Probably nowhere. The EPA admitted their *"decisions"* are driven by politics. In other words, government interference.

Both the Coalition and Labour governments are responsible for a critical state of affairs regarding forests.

COALITION AND LABOUR GOVERNMENTS SING FROM THE SAME CHOIR SHEET

Two critical programs which monitor and carry out important ongoing research on forestry operations in NSW have been defunded by the both governments.

Both programs are absolutely critical to protecting forest fauna and flora.

Not ONE WORD of this significant loss of funding and the ramifications has appeared in mainstream media. The takeover of Australia's mainstream media by News Ltd and vested interests has denied and almost completely quarantined the public from information about the dreadfully serious state of this ancient continent's environment and biodiversity.

Mid last year, under a Coalition government, the Forest Improvement Monitoring Program (FMIP) funding was ended. This program was wide ranging with monitoring and research responsibilities for native forestry

operations (known as CIFOA), the Regional Forest Agreements and private native forestry. A huge brief of work which came under the umbrella of the Natural Resources Commission.

The Commission's request to the coalition government to continue funding the program was rejected.

On 31st June 2023 the NSW Labour government ended funding for CIFOA, effectively leaving the Forestry Corporation to do what it likes as there's now no funding for a mandatory monitoring and research program. The government's budget doesn't come down until September which means that logging without a monitoring program can continue for months. Or forever. There's no

guarantees that CIFOA will be funded.

AFA made contact with the acting Executive Officer of the Natural Resources Commission. Who is going to carry on the work of the Commission with no government funding? Who will undertake the monitoring? Research?

According to the EO, the Commission will have to find some funds in its own budget. This is no solution.

Ending funding of the CIFOA program at a time when koalas and so many other wildlife species are struggling to survive as more and more habitat is destroyed is an act of gross irresponsibility.



No government can provide any evidence that demonstrates koalas and other wildlife whose habitats are burnt, corridors lost, shelters and food gone, suffering the cumulative impacts of fire, drought, climate change – can sustain industrial logging.

OFFSETS MARKET KOALAS FOR SALE

AFA now has the Biodiversity Offset Credit Market under investigation. This one is a corker. Let's say a developer has a project in an area which is koala habitat.

He can go to the Biodiversity Offset Dashboard, find out a cost per koala (lately \$300.00) and buy credits on the market to the value of the koalas he or his representative estimates are on the project site. The credits can then be used to improve another area, say by weeding or planting trees. Or the developer can pay off the destruction with dollars.

Bottom line. The koala population on the project area is destroyed. Planting trees in another koala habitat isn't going to bring those koalas back.

Valuing wildlife as a marketable "thing" places no value on their ecological role. Every species plays its part in maintaining a healthy ecosystem. Madness rules.

It's with some alarm AFA notes that Federal Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek wants to start a Green Nature Market, currently the focus of a senate inquiry. These offsets markets are serious threats to wildlife conservation.

WE ARE BEING CONNED

AFA has been digging up a tsunami of evidence of sell outs, shoddy science, cancelled programs, funding stopped and or never accounted for. Hundreds of thousands of pages of policies, plans, programs that amount to nothing to show.

Has anyone heard or read about any wild koala population increasing anywhere in NSW?

Over half a billion dollars spent on programs with no audits, no outcomes. Just more paper policies.

Biodiversity and the environment are at the bottom of the political pile. Meantime animals in our native forests are dying. Driven out of their home ranges with no place to go. Animals are intelligent beings and we are their guardians. Our lives are inter-connected.

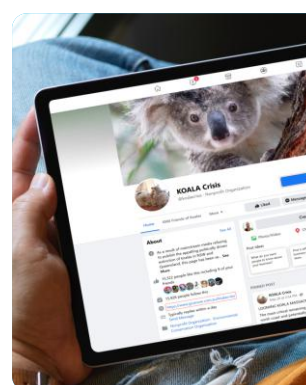
GETTING THE WORD OUT

Our coordinator is a former Fairfax investigative journalist. Sue is currently writing environmental articles for Crikey and Michael West Media providing important information about koalas, native forests and our rapidly disappearing wildlife.

These are important outlets. Michael West Media's focus is investigative journalism. Probably one of the few media organisations left in Australia that actually exposes dirty business.

Please help keep AFA's nose to the ground digging up the dirt. The research will be put to good use!

For the Animals.



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