



Australians for Animals

PROTECT • NURTURE • RESTORE

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WHY THE KOALA MUST BE SAVED

Australians for Animals Inc (AFA) has a very long history of campaigns to save Australia's remaining koalas.

In 1994, following an intense three-year research program overseen by some of Australia's best scientists, AFA was successful in listing the koala as Threatened under the United States Endangered Species Act. (ESA)

The charity made history. AFA was the first Australian environmental organisation to list an Australian species under the provisions of the US ESA.

Listing under this Act meant that if any US corporation's machinery, funds or equipment was used to destroy koalas and their habitat, AFA could take legal action in the US.

Back in 1994, a listing under the ESA was a most powerful environmental weapon, putting the Australian government on notice that the failure to protect koalas was now a global issue.

AFA is sad to say that nothing changed. The destruction continued, increasing exponentially. AFA's scientific submission provided evidence that the impacts of climate change were likely to cause koala extinction unless refuges were found.

No state or federal government responded or took action.

30 years later the situation koalas now face in every koala state is dire. AFA has always had the benefit of the advice of support of a number of expert scientists. Each one of these experts is warning of the looming extinction of koalas.

No, not in 2050. **NOW.** The responses from governments as a result of significant public and scientific concerns are truly terrifying. Australian wildlife is facing a grim future. Koalas are the indicator species of what will happen to all our forest dwelling fauna.

Here's a run-down for those of you who can still cope with reality. AFA has never sugar coated what's

happening. The charity committee again repeats that AFA is not political, the charity does not support any political party. The only issue the charity is concerned with is the ongoing survival of not only the koala but the natural world on which we depend for life.

This is a slice of the grim situation.

QUEENSLAND

The last population estimate was undertaken in 2012. Koala numbers were estimated to be between 35,000 and 150,000.

This estimate is scientifically unacceptable as the estimate makes no sense. With a gap of 115,000, the assessment is a fantasy.

South east Queensland has always been the home of the state's largest metapopulation. But massive urbanisation, infrastructure, highways, schools, shopping malls have ensured extraordinary mortality of koalas, with translocation failures, dog attacks, vehicle strikes.

SEQ is the most densely populated part of the state with over 3.5 million people and an expected increase to 5.3 million in the next 25 years.

Queensland governments have doomed the koala to extinction. People rule. Animals in the way of growth can go..... disappear... there's always zoos.

Under Premier Palaszczuk's disastrous reign, koalas were the focus of endless strategies, panels, advisory groups, plans, meetings, copious never ending reams of paper – all meaningless. Koalas continued to die. Their habitat destroyed in the name of growth.

Millions have been poured into chlamydia research. Yet the question of how the wild population of koalas could be vaccinated is never



addressed. Nor the cause of the multiple diseases, now rampant, stress, starvation and loss of shelter as habitat is eradicated.

The ongoing threats to remaining Queensland koala populations remains. Wind farms, urbanisation, Olympic stadiums.. on it goes.,

The CSIRO has been granted millions by the Albanese government to set up the National Koala Monitoring Program. No Queensland population estimate is given. Instead it's lumped in with NSW

which also has no current population estimate.

The estimates are in contradiction with previous government information which has been removed from government websites.

Reality? No government agency, department, council, has ANY IDEA how many koalas are left in Queensland.

Let's not forget koalas were upgraded to Endangered status in February 2022. In Queensland, the status is meaningless.



PLEASE HELP SAVE THE KOALAS

givenow.com.au/koalacrisis

NSW THE SECRET KOALA SUMMIT

In response to overwhelming public concern about the koala, with local extinctions increasing aided by native forest logging doing the job, Minister Sharpe announced a NSW Koala Summit at Taronga Zoo would take place on March 22nd.

“to inform the government’s work to protect the Australian icon.”

The summit, so the department of environment and heritage says, *“will be an opportunity for the NSW government to hear from a diverse range of stakeholders, including non-government organisations, private landholders, local councils, Aboriginal representatives, academics and researchers, businesses and policy makers.”*

Other media reports say wildlife

carers, farmers and government agencies will also be among the invitees. All in a day?

“Attendance at the Koala Summit will be by invitation only and numbers will be limited to approximately 150 people.”

There was no list of invitees for the public to scrutinise. No agenda. No information on speakers. No media allowed. No reports or recommendations.

Unfortunately, those of us whose

efforts to get the Minister and/or the Minns’ government to listen -much less act- to ensure koalas survive in the state, have fallen on deaf political ears. *“Government’s work to protect the Australian icon”* can only be described as greenwashing.

How the public can possibly believe that the Minister, who continues to approve logging in the proposed Great Koala National Park, is going to save koalas?

More empty words from the Minister reported by the Canberra Times.

“I know many of you are deeply concerned about the impact of forestry activities on koalas.” Sharpe’s solution?

“Work was beginning with industry on a road map for sustainable forestry and forest-based industries across NSW.”



“All of you will be part of this.” Whether this statement means the select 150 or the excluded ones or the broader community is not explained.

A road map is not the solution. Legal habitat protection, a ban on native forest logging and the immediate designation of the Great Koala National Park is what’s needed.

FEDERALLY

Tanya Plibersek, Minister for the Environment invited comment on her “Nature Positive Plan” (which should be called nature negative) based on a restricted terms of reference, destined to change the existing federal environmental law.

Bottom line? No more Koala Referral Guidelines, developers can self-refer – which basically means that corporations can decide for themselves if anything needs protecting on their project. Zero protection for koalas.

As if that’s not bad enough, the Minister’s plan now wants to put a value on species so that there can be “offsets” for environmental damage.

Offsets are just a recipe for more extinctions. Sparing some other environment whilst wiping out existing habitat is no offset. It’s just more destruction.

And unless environmental and community organisations have rights to legally challenge government decisions, the plan will continue to be a blank cheque for growth – at any cost.

It’s impossible to get any sense out of the Minister’s office.



Increasingly, government ministers are shutting themselves off from any public communication. Electronic forms are now the go.

WHAT AFA IS DOING

Options are limited. When democratic rights are not enshrined in laws, the only way to bring about change is by revolutions – peaceful ones. Protests from all corners, across social, cultural and economic boundaries.

AFA has written extensive submissions in response to both the Federal and NSW government plans. The charity has no expectation the ongoing destruction of our wildlife will cease. But public protest can grow, is growing and there are other legal options not previously tried.

AFA is waiting for a decision by a team of lawyers (a group the charity has not previously worked with) as to whether we might have an action. Unfortunately, we can’t give details or promises. But we have to try every option.

AFA is also grateful for the genuine grass roots activists who are allies of the charity, providing on the ground information. They are the most unlikely activists – many in their seventies willing to be arrested as they chain themselves to bulldozers.

AFA is also working with a small number of forest conservation organisations with a plan to start an electronic save the native forests newspaper. One of the big problems we face is that the public are NOT getting the totality of information.

Holding a Koala Summit with zero outcome and no mainstream media criticism is how misinformation campaigns are run. Keep the public in the dark!

But we do care. Thousands and thousands of people marched in support of a native forest logging ban organised by the Bob Brown Foundation. AFA is often in touch with Bob as we update on information.

SAVE THE FORESTS E-NEWSLETTER

It will cost some \$\$ to set up the e. newspaper as we have to contract a skilled computer whizz. Given the sheer extent of protest in the broad community now, getting access to the real news and the extent of misinformation being generated is critically important.

The recent challenge in the Federal Court over logging was lost. The judge insisting that any changes in forest legislation is not a matter for the courts but for governments.

So let’s get people aware, provide a platform for solutions and make this fight for the forests a national focus.

AFA continues to expose, educate, fund when possible grass roots activists, working with experts from the scientific and legal communities. **But we’re getting very short on funds.**

We all share the same goal. Protect Koalas, protect nature – for all our sakes.

Sue Arnold & Friends.



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