



Australians for Animals

PROTECT • NURTURE • RESTORE

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STANDING HEARING IN THE VICTORIAN SUPREME COURT

Australians for Animals has been somewhat overwhelmed with work – principally preparing for the standing hearing in the Victorian Supreme Court, held on May 7 and 8th.

The hearing is critically important as the judge will decide if the charity has the right to take Victoria's DEECA agency to trial over the helicopter shooting of more than 1000 koalas in Budj Bim National Park.

Our co-ordinator flew to Melbourne together with Al Oshlack who runs the Indigenous Justice Advocacy Network (IJAN). Al has run many lawsuits to save koala habitat and succeeded in winning extremely difficult lawsuits. He's acting as an advisor to AFA,

AFA has a top legal team (see the photo) comprising Vanessa Bleyer, lawyer, Dr Ashley Best, barrister

and Lisa de Ferrari SC. The two-day hearing was not only stressful but the Supreme Court is an ancient building with no cafeteria, hard to find toilets in the maze of courtrooms, terrible acoustics and heavy security creating long lines. Melbourne weather was cruel, rain and temperatures at 3 degrees.

Sue Arnold was in the witness box for nearly two hours as the Victorian government lawyers did their best to identify the charity as a bunch of "busybodies" with no rights to bring the government to account. It was a gruelling experience.



AFA's KOALA CONSERVATION EFFORTS

But given AFA's nearly 40 year history of koala campaigns, listing the koala under the provisions of the US Endangered Species Act as threatened, campaigns after campaigns in Queensland, NSW, South Australia and Victoria, it would be difficult to describe the charity as a "busybody".

With a lengthy list of forest campaigns, submissions to governments, setting up koala summits, endless articles in Independent Australia on koalas, AFA has the longest history of koala conservation in Australia.

Government lawyers tried to insist that AFA had done little in Victoria but the charity has spent several years attempting to run lawsuits over the hideous cruelty involved in harvesting blue gum plantations. Another national scandal.

As well, submissions on habitat loss, diseases, dieback, weaknesses of the Victorian legal system have been developed by AFA and submitted to the International Union for Nature (IUCN), the world's most prestigious conservation organisation. Scientists at IUCN are currently considering whether the koalas' status in Australia should be

upgraded. AFA's submissions have all been peer reviewed by one of the advisory scientists.

It can take months before a judgement comes down. So we wait. If AFA wins standing, then the trial will be the next step. Lawyers have told our coordinator that its nothing short of extraordinary that this case has taken now a full year and continues.

The Victorian government has attempted every delaying tactic with countless affidavits, and hearings to suppress the identification of whoever authorised the use of helicopters ensuring that the cost to AFA in the event of a loss will be significant.

It was inspiring to see a crowd of supporters in the court room, many people had travelled considerable distances to be at the hearing. As usual, the mainstream media



blackout continues. It's truly an incredible situation. When the helicopter shooting was exposed last year in international media, the news in Australia of the killing was extremely limited.

No doubt because a federal election was in process and a Labor government shooting koalas from helicopters would not go down well with the national electorate. But the censorship continues unabated.

Unfortunately, there's no group in Victoria with koalas as their sole focus. This has allowed the government to get away

with continually weakening any protection. At the same time rejecting any decisive action against wildlife cruelty.

The situation in this state is so dire, not only for koalas but for all Victorian wildlife, that AFA can only wonder if there's a government policy to rid the state of its wildlife heritage.

NSW governments have a terrible record. So do Queensland governments. But Victoria's treatment of koalas and wildlife leaves these two states in the kindergarten of cruelty.

FEDERAL BUDGET PUTS FUNDING FOR NATURE ON LIFE SUPPORT

Australia is losing its wildlife heritage. The Albanese government has further weakened any protection in the May budget.

According to the Biodiversity Council, investment in on-the-ground biodiversity programs for 2026-27 amount to just 0.06% of the federal budget. Allowing for inflation, this represents a 9% decline in real terms compared to 2025-26.

The Federal budget potentially sounds the death knell for wildlife populations struggling to survive as their habitats are increasingly destroyed by climate change impacts, massive urbanization projects, fossil fuel projects and population growth.

Environment Victoria sums up one of the most alarming policies. Provisions in the budget will accelerate the handover of federal environmental approval powers to

state and territory governments, fast-tracking decision-making and establishing a new “pay to destroy” offsets scheme

The Federal Budget allocates \$153.5 million over four years to progress bilateral agreements with states and territories that would see decision-making under the newly reformed Environment Protection Biodiversity and Conservation Act 1999 handed to states and territory governments, and enhance the use of AI in environmental approvals.

If bilateral agreements are made, state and territory governments will be able to greenlight mining, energy, and land clearing projects under federal laws as they impact

COURT COSTS

THE LAWSUIT IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT

AFA has to raise approximately \$100k to cover the costs for court fees and expert advice. Your donations are essential as we fight this David & Goliath battle against a taxpayer funded BIG government.

We have also set up a give now page for donations which can be found at:

www.givenow.com.au/koala-crisis

nationally significant environmental values like critically endangered species, world heritage areas, and RAMSAR wetlands.

Given the record of state governments' appalling environmental approvals, the bilateral agreements amount to a blank cheque for developers.

KOALAS ARE IGNORED BY THE COALITION, AND ONE NATION

THE ENVIRONMENT, WILDLIFE AND OUR RAPIDLY DISAPPEARING KOALAS

This is the grim reality facing the survival of koalas. The Federal Greens have not made biodiversity loss a major issue and there's barely a mention these days about koalas. Not one word has been said, written, publicised by any state or federal Green party about the helicopter shooting of over 1000 koalas. An incredible censorship.

As the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) considers whether to upgrade the current koala listing, (vulnerable), more dirty games are being played at the political level.

The IUCN is the world's most prestigious conservation organisation. IUCN listing of species influences the listings and policies of governments globally. Koalas have been upgraded to endangered status in Queensland, NSW and the ACT under the federal EPBC Act, but the plight of Victorian and South Australian koalas is ignored.



Upgrading the listing to endangered in Queensland and NSW has not resulted in any protection. Fossil fuel projects and massive urbanisation plans which destroy koala habitat are given the same old approvals by the federal government.

FALSE MESSAGES FROM GOVERNMENTS

But governments have found a way to ensure ICUN gets a different message. NSW is a good example.

NSW has come out with an incredible population estimate of 274,000 koalas. Based on highly questionable methodology. In 2016, the NSW Chief scientist stated the koala population in NSW was 36,000, again based on questionable methodology. Up to 12,000 koalas in NSW died in the 2019-2020 fires.

In ideal conditions with low mortality and no diseases, koala populations can double in 3 to 4 years. However, because female koalas typically only give birth to a single joey once a year, this rapid growth is only possible in environments completely free from threats like chlamydia, bushfires, and habitat fragmentation.

NSW has no populations living

in ideal conditions. Scientists estimate 90% of wild koalas have chlamydia and other diseases. Massive urbanisation projects, major forestry operations in koala hubs and habitats have ensured the population continues to decline.

BUT.. will IUCN accept the NSW government's latest effort to persuade a deeply concerned scientific community and public that somehow koalas breed like rabbits and are now in the hundreds of thousands? Exactly where ??

AFA is on the front line. Your support at this time is critical.

For the Koalas, Sue Arnold & Friends

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