

Biodiversity laws : koalas at risk

Hi Jennifer,

Pls ensure that Geoff sees this. We really need to strengthen laws against land-clearing, not make it easier . This is what we said to Geoff at our recent meeting. Sad that our Tweed koalas should be one "of species threatened with extinction." As a keystone species loss of koalas can cause ecosystem collapse,so we need to save them, not just because they are cute and cuddly.

Please speak up in caucus for those that cannot speak for themselves.

Best wishes,
Scott Sledge
NRG President

Tweed koalas threatened with extinction by land-clearing laws: Foley



Koalas have been hit by mass land clearing in Queensland.

The dwindling koala population on the Tweed Coast should ring alarm bells for the government not to gut statewide tree clearing laws, according to the NSW Labor opposition.

Opposition leader Luke Foley says the timing of the Baird government's plan to scrap the Native Vegetation Act (NVA) was 'terrible', coming as the Tweed koalas had recently been added to a growing list of endangered animal and plant species across NSW,

Mr Foley said the government's 'assault on the environment continues apace with the number of species of animals and plants in NSW threatened with extinction exceeding

1,000’.

‘Last month the most recent State of the Environment Report put the total number of species threatened with extinction at 999.

‘The inclusion this week of the Bellinger River Snapping Turtle and the koala population near the Tweed River in northern NSW brings the total to 1001 – a grim milestone for the environment.

‘Yet the government plans to legislate in the next parliamentary session to gut the laws that protect biodiversity.

‘The news that yet more mammals, birds, plants and amphibians are under threat comes against a backdrop of ongoing neglect of the state’s environment by the Baird-Grant government.

‘The NSW government has slashed the budget of environmental agencies by \$60 million since 2012, including a \$22 million cut to the National Parks and Wildlife Services.

‘Koala numbers on the NSW North Coast have plummeted by a third in 20 years and yet this government is spending a paltry \$45,000 this year in protecting them. It is a scandal.

‘Mike Baird loves a milestone and loves to be number one but I imagine that this is one statistic he won’t be crowing about.

‘This ever-growing list should sound the alarm bells and convince Mike Baird to drop his legislation that will wind back laws put in place a decade ago to protect biodiversity,’ Mr Foley said.

The coalition government has bowed to National Party pressure to scrap the act and replace it with another law, to appease farmers who want greater control over land clearing, but conservationists say it will lead to massive land clearing and biodiversity loss.

The Nature Conservation Council (NCC) has welcomed Labor’s stand for stronger land-clearing laws, saying it’s ‘part of a national response to climate change’.

NCC has called on premier Baird to ‘ensure the impact of land clearing on carbon pollution and climate are fully considered in his draft Biodiversity Conservation Bill, which is due out within weeks’.



The council's CEO Kate Smolski said 'every time large tracts of bushland and forests are bulldozed, carbon emissions soar'.

'We welcome the ALP's commitment to tackling this important issue head on,' Ms Smolski said.

'If Mr Baird is serious about addressing climate change, he must not let land clearing rates increase,' she said.

'Regrettably, that is what will happen if he repeals the Native Vegetation Act and replaces it with his planned Biodiversity Conservation Bill.

'Land clearing is bad for wildlife, healthy soils, clean water, regional communities and our climate.

'We urge Mr Baird and his Liberal colleagues to stand firm and not allow the Nationals, big agribusiness and developers to trash our bushland and wildlife habitat by weakening our nature conservation laws.

'The Baird government has committed to scrapping the state's land-clearing law, the Native Vegetation Act, and the Threatened Species Conservation Act, and to replacing them with a Biodiversity Conservation Act that would make it easier for agribusiness and developers to bulldoze bushland and forest.

'Similar measures in Queensland under the Campbell Newman Liberal-National Party resulted in a trebling of land clearing in that state.

'The bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef and drought across much of NSW is a clear reminder that we all pay the price when governments fail to carefully consider the climate-change consequences of our laws,' Ms Smolski said.