

## Environment

### Push to declare koalas endangered

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Conservationists will pressure the federal environment minister to urgently declare south-east Queensland's koala population critically endangered.

Australia's top koala experts will meet representatives from Mr Garrett's department in Canberra on Friday, to discuss a new national koala conservation strategy.

The Australian Koala Foundation's Deborah Tabart said the scientists would appeal for Mr Garrett to act quickly, as the population was in rapid decline due to habitat loss.

"The science shows that in the last decade, over 25,000 koalas have died in south-east Queensland alone," Ms Tabart said.

"There are less than 4,000 left, so these declines just cannot continue if we still want to see our beautiful icon here."

Mr Garrett says assessing the koala's status is a high priority, but a rigorous process must be done to ensure the decision is "scientifically robust and legally defensible".

Ms Tabart said the meeting would reveal whether the federal government was sincere about wanting to protect the koala.


"This will show their true intentions - the science is indisputable, half the people who wrote it will be in the room and the minister has the power to act," she told AAP.

"No developer could dispute this science ... but I'm embarrassed to say that I think Mr Garrett is under too much pressure from developers and, even more so, the premier of Queensland."

Post-mortem examinations of around 700 koalas in the region found most were "wasted" - or starving - when they died, proving habitat loss, not disease or dog attack, was the cause of their decline, Ms Tabart says.

Koalas also suffer from the reduced nutritional value of eucalyptus leaves attributed to climate change.

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