



Australian
Koala
Foundation
A.C.N. 010 922 102

media release

Embargoed: 7.30pm Monday November 9

Drastic Decline in Koala Numbers

The Australian Koala Foundation has released revised estimates of the Australian koala population ahead of a vital meeting in Canberra on November 10 where the fate of the koala will be decided by Environment Minister Peter Garrett's Threatened Species Steering Committee (TSSC).

The figures show a steep decline.

Australian Koala Foundation CEO Deborah Tabart OAM is concerned the Rudd administration will be reluctant to list the koala as a threatened species, following the path of the Howard Government's rejection of the AKF's 2003 nomination.

"Once you get into power you realise that developers and infrastructure builders do not like the environment in the way," Ms Tabart said.

"Our scientists have scoured every inch of the maps, read every piece of literature available, and we are ready for the fight of our lives.

"We are sure we have it right. There could be as few as 43,000 and no more than 80,000 koalas left on the mainland of Australia. We know this because we have the science, and the koala habitat is just not there.

"Previous estimates were around 100,000, but the data is now more accurate.

"Over the last twenty years, the AKF has scoured the bush, we have individually measured over 80,000 trees and we have 1,800 field sites.

"We absolutely challenge the Australian Government to match that," Ms Tabart said.

"The koalas are missing everywhere we look. The population in New South Wales has absolutely plummeted (5,435-8,800); the Queensland koala population (18,380-35,980) - which was traditionally a stronghold population - is showing a huge decline from irresponsible development; and in the west declines are clearly due to climate change.

"It is no surprise that Victorian numbers (18,720-34,050) are down due to bushfires and the true picture for this State is always marred by the perception of over population on islands, like French Island," she said.

"When the USA Government listed the Koala as vulnerable under USA law – they made it clear that having too many koalas in one place was a management issue and should not cloud the conservation debate on the mainland.

"Minister Garrett has all the power he needs. He could list the koala as threatened as a precautionary approach, but they are reluctant, I know they are."

The Chair of the TSSC, Associate Professor Bob Beeton, has presided over the two previous unsuccessful nominations of the koala.



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“These figures will surely change his mind,” Ms Tabart said.

“In previous nominations they took the ridiculous approach of saying that ‘forests had increased so koalas must have’.

“They will not be able to use that trick on the koala this time. It is far more complicated than that. The one positive thing is that we are in the room; that has never happened before.

“The criteria under the Federal Government’s EPBC Act are too narrow and a whole of landscape approach like the AKF’s is what is needed to protect the koala.

“We are hoping they are listening.”

For more information, please visit www.savethekoala.com.

- ENDS -

- **Interview opportunities: Deborah Tabart OAM, ph 0407 750 668. Deborah will be in Canberra on November 9 and 10.**
- **Australian Koala Foundation scientists who are attending the meeting, Dr Douglas Kerlin and Mr Dave Mitchell, will also be available for briefings.**
- **Map available from lorraine@savethekoala.com or online at www.savethekoala.com/koalanumbers.html**