



## Garrett taken to task over 'shocking behaviour'

In a letter to Minister for Environment Protection, the Hon Peter Garrett MP, The Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) has described his move to potentially list the koala as 'conservation dependant' rather than 'vulnerable' under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) as shocking.

The CEO of the Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) Deborah Tabart OAM is outraged that Mr Garrett's department has hinted that the koala will not be listed as 'vulnerable', a decision that will see the continued decline of koala habitat.

In the letter, Ms Tabart states that she imagines the Minister fears a vulnerable listing as it risks upsetting vested interests.

"It [*a 'conservation dependant' listing*] would mean your Government needs to do no more than what has already been done by writing a new National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy, which by your own Department's assessment did not work last time and is unlikely to work into the future", Ms Tabart wrote.

"The average Australian would be shocked to discover the Government is playing such games" Ms Tabart said.

She believes the Government's failure to mention the AKF except for "cryptic criticisms" in their nomination to list the koala as either 'vulnerable' or 'conservation dependant' show complete disrespect for the AKF's efforts to conserve the koala.

"There is no mention of the unprecedented data of 80,000 individually measured trees and the 2000 field sites which underpin our habitat and koala number assessments", Ms Tabart said in her letter.

Ms Tabart said it has come to a "stalemate of who has more data than the other".

She said that the Minister's department is "on very shaky ground when it implies that it has scientific evidence to support the ridiculous estimate of 420,000 koalas" with many respected scientists in Australia strongly supporting the AKF's estimates of between 43,000 and 80,000 koalas.

Ms Tabart concluded the letter by saying that she is extremely disappointed in his lack of commitment to protecting the koala and stated that Mr Garrett has joined "a long line of politicians... that just fail to give protection when it is due".

It could be another ten years before the koala is considered again for a 'vulnerable' listing, in the AKF's view it will very likely be another ten years too late.

- ENDS -

**Interview opportunities: Deborah Tabart OAM, ph 0407 750 668**