



**Australian
Koala
Foundation**

ACN 010 922 102

Saving 20% of Australia: The Urgent Action Needed for Koalas in 2024

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In 2024, the Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) will be taking a stronger stance on the critical issue of Koala survival, emphasising that only species-specific legislation can ensure their protection.

Despite being listed as Endangered in Queensland, New South Wales, and the Australian Capital Territory, the Koala situation hasn't improved, and they are still not protected in Victoria or South Australia. The federal law responsible for Koala protection, the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act, was deemed ineffective in an Independent Review by Professor Graeme Samuel (the Samuel Review).

Deborah Tabart OAM, Chair of the Australian Koala Foundation, is calling for stronger action to be taken in 2024.

"Year after year the Koala population continue to suffer, and Australians haven't failed to notice. The AKF receive countless emails, messages, and letters from desperate people all over the country who witness Koala habitat diminishing at an alarming rate.

"Despite the government allocating funding to what the AKF consider to be band-aid solutions, the plight of the Koala has not improved. We would not need Koala hospitals if the habitat was safe. It's time to acknowledge that Koalas need a Koala Protection Act, and we have faith in nothing less than this." Tabart says.

The EPBC Act falls short of protecting Koala habitat and as a result, Koala populations decline. Urban development, land clearing, logging, and infrastructure projects encroach on Koala habitats despite the EPBC's existing provisions. Enforcement and monitoring of this law are inadequate and often non-existent.

"I think Australians would be shocked to know that clearing forests does not trigger the Act, only the Minister can do that, and I am pretty sure in my long career I have not seen that happen."

"We understand Minister Plibersek, the Federal Environment Minister has asked 30 groups to review her changes to the EPBC Act. I am confident that the AKF will not be included in this review, despite my request to her Department. I even wonder if these groups are from industry and perhaps some token conservation groups are able to comment." Tabart says.

Amidst the urgent need for measures like the Koala Protection Act, recent findings from an [ABC report](#) are striking: lobbyists significantly outnumber politicians in Canberra, at a ratio of three to one. This statistic spotlights a concerning imbalance, emphasising the pervasive influence lobbyists might hold in shaping decisions regarding Koala conservation and environmental laws.

"It is ironic isn't it, that on one hand, the Government say they worry about the future of this planet but then pander to big business who absolutely have too much access to our lawmakers."

Independent MP, Dr Monique Ryan, has tabled the Lobbying (Improving Government Honesty and Trust) Bill 2023 in recent days. This bill will review how lobbyists are regulated. Dr Ryan revealed that many are simply wandering the halls of Parliament House speaking to our decision-makers at will.

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In 2024, the Australian Koala Foundation is determined to take the plight of the Koala to Canberra and has plans to employ a [Koala Whisperer](#), a lovely title for a legal advisor who can advocate for the Koalas; and explain the worth of the Koala Protection Act (KPA).

“It is my view that the KPA scares our governments, both federal and in the states because the law places full responsibility on the proponent to prove that their activity is benign rather than the community having to prove that it is destructive. This would change environmental law forever when it is enacted.”

Koala habitat takes up 20% of the Australian continent and is home to millions of creatures great and small. When developers and industry receive approvals for projects, millions of lives are obliterated under the legal guise of a ‘Permit to Take’.

“Or, as I see it, a ‘Permit to Kill’. The KPA is a no-brainer solution that will safeguard countless species from further harm and this senseless destruction. The question remains; why isn’t Minister Plibersek supporting it?” Tabart says.

The AKF is urging all Australians to scrutinise the motives behind the Australian Government, question their stance on the Koala Protection Act and why support is lacking for real legal change. All Koalas lovers are encouraged to write to the Australian Government urging Minister Plibersek to champion this crucial legislation.

About the Australian Koala Foundation

The Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) is the principal non-profit, non-government organisation dedicated to the conservation and effective management of the wild Koala and its habitat. AKF aims to refine and update the Koala Habitat Atlas mapping of all wild Koala habitat and to get the Koala Protection Act enacted, ensuring the longevity of Koalas and their habitat.