

## Koalas put on danger list as numbers in the wild plunge to fewer than 80,000

- Habitat destruction and climate change are factors
- Chlamydia also blamed for drop in their fertility

By [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

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**In decline: Koalas could soon find themselves on the endangered list after some studies suggest there are fewer than 80,000 left in the wild**

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Koalas are set to be listed as a threatened species after a plunge in the wild population.

Some studies suggest there are fewer than 80,000 left, and research near Sydney shows numbers have fallen 75 per cent since 1993.

They are suffering from habitat destruction and climate change, and many carry chlamydia, which has been blamed for a drop in their fertility.

Australian environment minister Tony Burke is expected to list koalas in south-east Queensland as 'endangered' and those in east New South Wales as 'vulnerable', according to local media reports.

This means restrictions would be placed on mining projects, logging operations and housing developments in their habitats in these areas.

But environmental groups say such restrictions do not go far enough, and should cover a wider area.

Deborah Tabart, chief executive of the Australian Koala Foundation told the Australia Broadcasting Corp:

'Minister Burke has already foreshadowed that he is not going to protect koalas across the whole landscape.

'Because I have been in my job for so long and I sat through the senate enquiries last year, I know industry is afraid of a listing and I know they have lobbied very hard.

The logging industry, the development industry and forestry all pleaded with the senators last year, please do not list.'

Research conducted in Gunnedah, a koala habitat 250 miles northwest of Sydney, has shown that numbers for the animal have declined by 75 percent since 1993.



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**Disease threat: Many koalas carry chlamydia, which has been blamed for a drop in their fertility**

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Ecological expert David Paull, who did the Gunnedah study, attributed the decline of koala numbers in that area to the drought and hot weather recorded in the last decade.

'A lot of koalas were dehydrated, and I think perhaps it might be an early sign of climate change that has something to do with this,' said Paull.

Koalas in other parts of Australia also suffer from habitat loss, which is caused mainly by housing development, car accidents and dog attacks, Paull said.

A senate inquiry initiated by the Green party last year recommended that the koala should be considered for being listed as a vulnerable species in areas of significant population decline.

'Tony Burke can't delay his decision any further - he should list the koala as vulnerable, and act now to strengthen national environment laws,' Australian Greens senator Larissa Waters said in a statement on Thursday.

Burke, who has deferred the decision twice before, is due to rule next Monday based on advice from the national Threatened Species Scientific Committee.