

# Danger watch for NSW koalas

*EXCLUSIVE* by Alison McMeekin [The Daily Telegraph](#) April 30, 2012 12:00AM



Everyone loves our iconic animal ... Oprah Winfrey with a koala / Pic: AP Source: AP

## **THE state's koalas will be protected under national environment laws after a clamour to add them to the list of threatened species.**

Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke will include Australia's most at-risk populations on the list, with koalas in NSW, Queensland and the ACT classified "vulnerable".

"Koalas are an iconic Australian animal and they hold a special place in the community," Mr Burke said. "People have made it very clear to me that they want to make sure the koala is protected for future generations."

Conservationists have long called for the government to list the koala as a vulnerable species in areas of serious population decline.

Only last week, Greens environment spokesperson Larissa Waters warned koalas could become extinct in the wild "in our lifetime".

## Koala Sanctuary

The koalas will join 55 other mammals listed as vulnerable on the threatened species list, including the numbat, humpback whale, brush-tailed rock wallaby, western ringtail possum and the Australian sea lion.

Mr Burke said his decision to list the koala followed a rigorous scientific assessment by the Threatened Species Scientific Committee, which gathered information from a variety of experts over the past three years.

"Koala populations are under serious threat from habitat loss and urban expansion, as well as vehicle strikes, dog attacks and disease," he said.

"However koala numbers vary significantly across the country, so while koala populations are clearly declining in some areas, there are large, stable or even increasing populations in other areas."

Mr Burke said koala numbers needed to be managed in some areas of Victoria and South Australia, where they were "eating themselves out of suitable foraging habitat".

"But the Queensland, NSW and ACT koala populations are very clearly in trouble," he added.

Mr Burke said the Gillard government had committed \$300,000 to find out more about our koala habitats.

"This funding will be used to develop new survey methods that will improve our knowledge of the quality of koala habitat and help fill data gaps to enhance our understanding and ability to protect the species," he said.

"The new funding is in addition to more than \$3 million we have invested since 2007 to ensure the resilience and sustainability of our koala population."