

# Koalas left vulnerable

04 May, 2012 08:45 AM

**THREATENED** Far South Coast koalas have been left out of Commonwealth protection and could be extinct within a few years say conservationist groups.

Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke announced on Monday that koala populations in NSW, the ACT and Queensland would be listed as a vulnerable species on the national list of threatened species.

Koala activists welcomed the news, but expressed disappointment the listing did not include other states.

In the Bega Valley, conservationist groups also expressed their bitterness that Far South Coast koalas would not be protected as Regional Forestry Agreements bypass any Commonwealth protection.

“Logging is due to begin in Far South Coast koala habitat within days,” South East Region Conservation Alliance spokeswoman Prue Acton said.

“This habitat is in public forest managed by the NSW Government and logging contractors have priority over conservation.”

Ms Acton said logging is driving the local koala population to extinction.

She said only 30 Strzelecki koalas - a genetically distinct breed found only on the Far South Coast and in Gippsland, Victoria – remain.

“This announcement makes no difference to their survival,” she said.

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.

Conservationists also welcomed the NSW Labor Party’s support for federal threatened species listing for the koala, but warn it will do little to help local populations.

Chipstop campaign spokeswoman Harriett Swift said a federal listing is good news, but on its own will do nothing for koalas living in state forests.

“This is because the principal Commonwealth law protecting threatened species, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, does not apply in state forests,” Ms Swift said.

“Virtually all of our local koalas are in state forests and thus would not benefit from any Commonwealth listing.

“All of our state forests are covered by Regional Forest Agreements and the current law falsely assumes that these provide sufficient protection for threatened species.

“We have seen time and time again that threatened species prescriptions are either useless or are flouted by state logging agencies.

“A licence to log is a license to kill and harm threatened species, to say nothing of the more common animals such as wombats and lyrebirds which are not protected at all.

“While we welcome Labor spokesman Luke Foley’s support for the koala’s listing, it is only very recently that a state Labor government permitted logging in koala habitat in Bermagui and Mumbulla forests.

“If Mr Foley really wants to help ensure the survival of these koalas, he should persuade his federal colleague to end the EPBC Act exemption for RFA areas,” Ms Swift said.

[Share on Facebook](#)

[Tweet on Twitter](#)