

Winston the koala considered a threat to Parliament

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HE is a hit with tourists, but Winston's furry face has been deemed too untrustworthy to enter Federal Parliament.

Set for a media engagement to highlight the plight of his kind in a parliamentary courtyard today, the cuddly koala was denied entry for being a safety risk.

"Apparently Winston's a security threat," Greens Senator Larissa Waters said, who had invited Winston and his handlers to call for better koala protection but didn't give security enough notice.

"I don't know. I think millions of tourists would disagree with you there."

The rebuke was given despite Winston being granted entry last November with a posse of lizards, snakes and a baby dingo to celebrate National Threatened Species Day.

In 2010, he joined a Tasmanian devil and a python on the same national day.

Not to be swayed from his commitments, Winston instead took to a leafy stand under a shady spot by the building's entrance.

He watched on as Senator Waters called on Environment Minister Tony Burke to add the koala to the list of nationally threatened species and strengthen environmental laws to protect them.

Mr Burke is due to make a decision by Monday and has indicated such a declaration might apply only to certain states.

Senator Waters said Australia could see the extinction of koalas in the wild this lifetime.

"We simply can't imagine as Australia without our unique and precious koalas, but that's exactly what experts are saying," the Greens environment spokeswoman said.