

Luke Foley MLC

Shadow Minister for Environment and Climate Change



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NSW KOALAS ADDED TO NATIONALLY THREATENED SPECIES LIST

MESSAGE TO ROBYN PARKER – LOGGING DOES NOT PROTECT KOALAS

Shadow Environment Minister Luke Foley today welcomed the Federal Government's decision to list the NSW koala as a nationally threatened species - and called on the O'Farrell Government to act immediately to protect koala habitats across the State.

"The addition of the NSW koala to the nationally threatened species list will go a long way towards protecting the dwindling number of koalas we have left in our State," Shadow Environment Minister, Luke Foley said today.

"Before white settlement, there were an estimated 10 million koalas in Australia. Today, the NSW koala population could be as low as 10,000.

"I have been calling for the NSW koala to be recognised as a threatened species and I'm thrilled the Federal Government has taken this important step to protect one of our national icons.

"The onus is now on the O'Farrell Government to protect the remaining koala habitats in NSW.

"The O'Farrell Government should support my private members bill amending the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* to increase maximum penalties to \$220,000, or two years imprisonment, or both for environmental offences committed in the course of carrying out of forestry operations.

"A tenfold increase in penalties for illegal forestry operations will help ensure the future of our threatened native animals.

"In NSW we have three key koala populations, on the north coast, south coast and west of the divide around the Pilliga, near Gunnedah. Each needs immediate action.

"Five weeks ago, I visited the Boambee State Forest near Coffs Harbour and witnessed the devastation of koala feed trees, where Environment Minister Robyn Parker claims 'logging protects koalas'.

"The Boambee State Forest is a key habitat for the largest coastal koala population left in eastern Australia.

"Robyn Parker has also refused to stop logging in the State's south east forests, with the Bermagui State Forest currently being logged.

"This is an important corridor between the Mumbulla and Kooraban State Forests, two of the last breeding grounds for koalas on the south coast. Scientific experts advise these koalas may represent one of only two small reservoirs of the native genotype of all the Victorian and South Australian koalas left today.

"We need an Environment Minister who is willing to stand up for koalas – not one who claims logging protects them."

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