

Koala researcher says threatened species listing long overdue

By [Margaret Burin](#)

The Federal Government has further delayed a decision on whether to include the koala on the national threatened species list. But koala researcher Rolf Schlagloth says it's already long overdue.

Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke was today expected to announce whether or not the koala would be listed as a threatened species.

But Mr Burke announced he would delay the decision by another 10 weeks to seek further information from The Threatened Species Scientific Committee about the exact locations of dwindling koala numbers.

Ballarat researcher Rolf Schlagloth says it's dangerous to limit the threatened species listing to selected areas.

"I think we all know that the koala is threatened in Australia in general and in some areas more than others.

"We don't have the numbers exactly of how many koalas are where and whether they're declining or not - I think there's enough anecdotal evidence, historical evidence, to say that koalas are declining in most, if not all areas, apart from some isolated patches of habitat that are not natural, they're man-made."

Mr Schlagloth believes the areas selected will be down to politics.

"Very often you will find that there are certain electorates that are sensitive for koalas and koala habitat, and also development.

"It probably comes down to a simple mathematical calculation - where will we lose or gain the most seats with whatever decision the government comes up with?"

Mr Burke says the Federal Government will not introduce a blanket threatened species listing across Australia because "there are many places where koala numbers remain high".

But Mr Schlagloth says koalas face problems due to inbreeding and numbers are high in some areas because their habitat is diminished.

"It's a mismanagement of government over the last 100 years - the koala was basically extinct in all of Victoria apart from isolated pockets in east Gippsland.



A koala on Mount Warrenheip, near Ballarat. (File photo)
(Margaret Burin - ABC Local)

"Then some koalas, very few, were taken to a couple of islands, so they reproduced...so all the koalas that are now in Victoria have been reintroduced [and] have a very narrow gene pool."

Mr Burke says he will announce the decision on April 30.



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