

Koalas get some protections from developers

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Koalas will be better protected in NSW, Queensland and ACT ... but not Victoria or SA. *Photo: Peter Rae*

Koalas will be offered greater protection in NSW, Queensland and the ACT, but not Victoria and South Australia under a decision announced today by Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke.

Mr Burke said the koala would be classified as vulnerable on the threatened species list in some states after numbers dropped by 40 per cent in Queensland and by a third in NSW over the past two decades.

He said the decision followed a three-year scientific assessment by the Threatened Species Scientific Committee.

"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."

He said in some areas in Victoria and South Australia koalas were eating themselves out of suitable foraging habitat and numbers need to be managed.

"But the Queensland, New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory koala populations are very clearly in trouble, so we must take action," he said.

Mr Burke said developers will have to account for the koala listing when making building applications.

"If someone wants to make a development there is a tougher hurdle as a result of a species being endangered," he told the ABC. "That is what environmental legislation is designed to do."

He said the Gillard government had committed \$300,000 of new funding to learn more about koala habitat.