

# Koala advocates welcome vulnerable listing

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Koala advocates have welcomed the federal government's decision to list the marsupial as vulnerable in parts of Australia, but are disappointed the listing excludes some states.

Environment Minister Tony Burke said today at-risk koala populations in NSW, Queensland and the ACT would be included on the national list of threatened species.

It means developers will have to account for koala listings when making building applications.

"If someone wants to make a development there is a tougher hurdle as a result of a species being endangered," Mr Burke told ABC Radio.

Australian Koala Foundation spokeswoman Deborah Tabart said she had been waiting for a decision since 1996, when the federal government's chief advisory body on threatened species first considered the plight of koalas.

"It's a victory for Queensland and NSW and I am relieved," Ms Tabart said.

But she was disappointed populations in Victoria were not included.

Koala numbers in Victoria's Grampians National Park, in the state's west, and at Mount Macedon, north-west of Melbourne, were declining, she said.

Greens environment spokeswoman Larissa Waters described Mr Burke's decision as "a big step forward in getting the koala the protection it urgently needs".

But Senator Waters believes it would have made more sense to give the koala a national listing, as a precaution against any decline in numbers in South Australia and Victoria.

The Wilderness Society said the at-risk listings were a "welcome first step" to greater protection of koalas, but was concerned about declining numbers in Victoria's Strzelecki Ranges, in South Gippsland, where logging is occurring.

However, Mr Burke said in some areas of Victoria and South Australia, there were large populations of koalas that were eating themselves out of their habitats.

A Senate inquiry last year found koalas were abundant in South Australia, but declining in Queensland and NSW.

The government was advised in September 2010 not to list the koala because of insufficient data.

**AAP**



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