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Burke slams Newman over koalas

Rae Wilson | 1st May 2012 4:45 PM

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FEDERAL Environment Minister Tony Burke has hit out at the [Queensland Premier's take on koala protection](#) with a media release titled "environmental vandal".

Mr Burke said on Tuesday Campbell Newman had, in a fortnight, reversed "his own rhetoric about environmental law reform" by criticising new laws as "needless duplication" and "mindless green tape".

"Only a fortnight ago Mr Newman was offering to simplify processing by having Queensland enforce the national environmental standards. Now he wants to declare war on the same standards he was offering to enforce," he said.

"The science is overwhelming that the Queensland koala has taken a massive hit over the past 20 years.

"Campbell Newman may be happy for Queensland to be a place where koalas only live in zoos, but I am not.

"Only a few weeks ago COAG agreed on a process to streamline environmental approvals. The agreement was about getting rid of red tape, not abandoning science and lowering standards.

"Campbell Newman was in agreement with the state premiers and the Prime Minister that the state governments had the capacity to deliver environmental assessments and approvals to the standards required by national environmental law.

"For an about face like this in the first weeks of the job Campbell Newman must have some big plans for the bulldozer.

"Occasionally people question environmental protections which protect species no one has ever heard of. Mr Newman seems to have decided the koala is in the same category."

But the government has moved to reaffirm Mr Newman's commitment to the protection and sustainability of Queensland's koalas.

Environment and Heritage Protection Minister Andrew Powell said the government would honour its promise to commit \$26.5 million to protecting the species.

"The Newman-led Government is committed to decisive action to halt the decline in koala numbers and has committed to a range of measures to ensure long-term protection of koalas and their habitat, without instruction from our Federal counterparts," he said.

"While we will continue to breathe life into the construction and resource industries, we appreciate that this cannot happen at the expense of this iconic species."

"In light of the fact we have clearly outlined a comprehensive strategy for protection and rehabilitation of Queensland's koalas, Mr Burke's announcement on Tuesday demonstrates another instance of the federal government trying to replicate laws that are already in place at a state level."



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