

## Koala (and Other Native Species) Protection Act

There is no being more emblematic of Australia than the Koala, yet our disregard for this creature and the environment which supports it has seen it become listed as 'vulnerable' in Queensland, New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory under the Federal *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Unfortunately, this protection has proven insufficient to reverse habitat loss and ongoing koala population decline.

This is attributable to inadequate enforcement of the Act which even when enforced allows only for civil penalties. No criminal conviction or imprisonment can result under the current Act, no matter how egregious or destructive the breach. This must change if we are to avoid the eventual extinction of the koala and other native animals.

To help prevent this foreseeable eventuality, The New Liberals will introduce a Federal *Koala Protection Act*, providing **criminal** penalties for persons and corporations who harm, take, sell, or interfere with any koala, or in any way damage its habitat. This protection will also be extended to any native species that is considered threatened, vulnerable, endangered, critically endangered or extinct in the wild.

Michael Gliksman & Kimberly Nissen