

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister of Australia
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

The Hon Sussan Ley MP
Environment Minister
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

1 October 2020

Dear Prime Minister and Minister Ley,

Australia is home to an incredible array of unique and wonderful wildlife – 80% of our native mammals are found nowhere else on earth.ⁱ Like all Australians, we feel a great love for these animals. What sets us apart as wildlife carers and organisations is our dedication to rescuing, recovering and rehabilitating these creatures when they become sick, injured or orphaned.

Our shared vision is for an Australian community that understands, values and cares about wildlife.

But Australia is in the midst of an extinction crisis. We have already lost more mammals to extinction than any other nation.ⁱⁱ As wildlife carers and organisations, we are on the front line of this crisis. We attend to injured animals burnt in bushfires, hit by speeding cars, mauled by cats and dogs and rescued from bulldozed bushland.

We don't often speak out publicly. Our focus is on saving individual animals. But the situation for Australian wildlife is so dire right now, we feel we must stand up for them.

Last summer's unprecedented bushfires, on the back of the worst drought in decades, took a devastating toll on Australia's wildlife. It's estimated up to three billion native animals were killed, injured or displaced when more than 11 million hectares of bushland was burnt.ⁱⁱⁱ

As a result of the fires, we cared for native animals that had been scorched, lost habitat and faced starvation and displacement. Many of us are also involved in wildlife recovery efforts above and beyond our extensive care and rescue work.

But it is not only bushfires and drought that are harming our wildlife. In the 20 years Australia has had a national environment law, more than 7.7 million hectares of habitat for threatened species has been destroyed.^{iv} That's an area larger than Tasmania.

It is heartbreaking for us to bring individual native animals back from the brink of death when the habitat they need for survival gets smaller and smaller each day.

Now more than ever we need to protect our precious wildlife. Without strong environment laws to safeguard native animals and their habitat – and a tough cop on the beat to enforce those laws – future generations simply won't get to enjoy the natural environment as we do today.

The current review of Australia's national environment laws presents a once-in-a-decade opportunity to give our wildlife, and the habitat they need, the protection they deserve. But weakening these laws by handing federal approval powers to state and territory governments, without established national environmental safeguards, will only result in more habitat destruction, more sick, injured and orphaned animals, and more unnecessary pain and suffering.

We ask that you act urgently to strengthen Australia's national environment laws, create an independent regulator to enforce them. We alone can't save our wildlife from extinction by caring for native animals when they are injured or displaced. With strong new laws, an independent regulator and increased investment in restoration and recovery, you can.

Yours sincerely

Dr Megan Davidson	CEO	Wildlife Victoria	Vic
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Vanda Grabowski	President	Koala Action Inc.	Qld
Meghan Halverson	Ambassado r	Queensland Koala Crusaders	Qld

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Cathy Burns	Treasurer	Black Cockatoo Preservation Society	WA
Wayne Cameron	Wildlife Carer	Bulimba Creek Catchment Coordinating Committee	Qld
Ray Chambers Murray Chambers Susan Gribble	Wildlife Carers	Koala Rescue Queensland	Qld
Brendon Gray Judi Gray	Wildlife Carers	Toowoomba Koala and Wildlife Rescue Queen	Qld
Bev Langley	Owner	Minton Farm Animal Rescue Centre	SA
Manfred Zabinkas	Owner/ Operator	East Trentham Wildlife Shelter and as Five Freedoms Animal Rescue	Vic
Shai Ager	Ecologist	Agile Wallaby Project	Qld

ⁱ Australian Museum, [Endemism in Australian Mammals](#), 13 November 2018

ⁱⁱ The Guardian, [A national disgrace': Australia's extinction crisis is unfolding in plain sight'](#), 13 February 2018.

ⁱⁱⁱ ABC News, [3 billion animals killed or displaced in Black Summer bushfires, study estimates](#), 28 July 2020

^{iv} The Guardian, [Australia cleared 7.7m hectares of threatened species habitat since introduction of environment act](#), 9 September 2019