



Australians for Animals

PROTECT • NURTURE • RESTORE

Reg. Charity No. CFN12644

PO Box 414, Brunswick Heads 2483 Australia Tel: 61 2 6680 3674 Fax: 61 2 6680 3612 Email: info@australiansforanimals.org.au

APRIL 2022 NEWSLETTER



FLOOD NIGHTMARE

The dreadful floods came to our region. There's really no words that describe the disaster, in many respects one that was worse than the catastrophic bushfires. So many animals drowned. Many were tied up or trapped in fenced areas, the torrential rain came up so quickly and the raging floodwaters were very dangerous.

Currents were too strong for many would be rescuers in tinnies who were unable to get to the animals.

Wildlife that survived will have serious problems trying to find healthy habitats. Like thousands of humans, many flood impacted species will have no home, no food, no clean water, vulnerable to predators.

Toxic pollution from floodwaters is causing cancers in horses and poisoning seabirds with botulism. Echidnas has lost their burrows; many young animals are orphaned.

Australians for Animals Inc. was hamstrung through the flood emergencies. We were doing the ground work to gather crates and cages to be taken to Lismore so rescued animals could be taken to safety. In the middle of a critical phone call, all communication went down. No internet, no texts, no mobile, nothing. The communication black out lasted a week in our area, in other places it's taken 3 weeks.

As a result of the communication collapse, animal rescues became increasingly difficult. No one could make contact to liaise rescues or find out where to take sodden, terrified animals. The three vet clinics in Lismore were destroyed by flood waters.

Eventually we found out that some rescued animals were taken to Southern Cross University where owners who lost their pets in the floodwaters might be able to find them. AFA also heard that a number of animals were put down without any good reason. Many rescuers wouldn't collect animals, only humans.

Throughout this dreadful ordeal, we've seen the best and the worst of humanity. There's no question that if local people, surfers, farmers, people

with tinnies, canoes, kayaks, blow up pools, hadn't got out into the raging waters, many more people and animals would have died. Apparently, SES Lismore had TWO only boats, an incredibly shocking situation given that Lismore is the flood capital of Australia. AFA was told that SES wouldn't pick up animals and we have no way of confirming this at the moment.

The charity has funded many small groups and individuals who have taken in animals either left homeless because of floods, or who have lost their owners.

CHAOS

A NEW WAY OF LIFE.

When communication was finally restored, AFA tried to find out how many animals lost their lives in the far north coast region. Lismore Council kept no records. Lismore WIRES was called several times but no response to our question. Vets have told the charity that thousands of livestock drowned, hundreds of horses were also lost.

AFA is not going to report on the horror stories in this newsletter as we know people have seen the footage on TV and in mainstream media. What we can report is that the rescue operations were absolutely chaotic.

Without communication and with no emergency plans for people and animals, our world descended into complete chaos. As a result of a landslide, one young couple in Upper Main Arm were buried in mud up to their necks with their 8-month-old baby nearby. They weren't found for almost two days, fortunately baby and family have survived.

Other incredible brave souls went out in tinnies, kayaks, surfboards, risking



their lives diving into flooded houses to rescue stranded animals swimming furiously trying to escape. Some were found crunched up on floating furniture literally inches from the ceiling, with no hope of getting out. Rescuers swam a large number of dogs through drowned houses to waiting boats.

The soul-destroying war in Ukraine

with footage of women, children and pets fleeing from the Russian invasion is creating more heartbreak.

Man's inhumanity knows no boundaries.

Incredible people have tried to right the balance, taking in human and animal refugees both in Ukraine and here on the east coast with no idea what the future will look like.

THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT YOUR VOTE

With a federal election to be called very soon, it's important to be aware that the Morrison government if re-elected will change the face of Australia permanently. Morrison has run the most environmentally damaging government in living memory.

The L-NP vision of the future is endless growth, useless environmental legislation, deliberate wiping out of biodiversity, ignore climate change, destroy primary agricultural lands on behalf of the fossil fuel industry, and a rapid ongoing disappearance of democracy.

Australia will become the world's quarry.

Climate change is wreaking havoc in this ancient land as evidenced by the bushfires and latest flood.

Our wildlife is in grave jeopardy. Legal protection is vanishing. Concern for future generations impacted by federal government approvals for fossil fuel industries- industries which will generate massive carbon emissions was dismissed by the Federal Court. The three judges ruled Sussan Ley, minister for environmental destruction had no responsibility for our kids' future survival, even though the EPBC Act states it does in the objectives of the legislation.

Morrison flew into Lismore and refused to have any photos with flood victims. No wonder, people are so angry at his complete failure to deal with climate change, the major cause of the floods. Morrison actually accused protestors of "weaponizing their plight for political gains". He refused to grant Byron, Ballina and Tweed shire the same relief funds granted to Lismore, Clarence Valley and Richmond, yet the damage in the three shires who missed out was as significant.

Shire residents granted the miserable \$3,000 were all national party seats, the other three shire seats were Labour or Green. At the time of writing this newsletter, apparently Morrison had a change of heart and the three non-national party seats were granted \$3,000.

It's really important to understand how our communities were abandoned by the governments. There was no proper warning of the serious nature of the rain bomb about to hit. One vet told AFA he watched Sky News from 3.00am – 5.00am the night the floods began as he was deeply concerned by the torrential rain. He found out later that at 3.00am the Lismore levee broke yet there was not a word of the disaster on Sky News program he was watching.

Communities were literally left to fend for themselves. Private helicopters that could have helped locate distressed animals at extreme risk were not given the go ahead to fly. The ADF wasn't called in until way too late.

At one stage locals in Lismore had to fund raise themselves to pay for a helicopter to search areas.

Perrottet came to Lismore for more photo opportunities and a few hand outs (like 120 mobile homes and some grant money) but no focus on climate change impacts or the fact that the government had been warned repeatedly of catastrophic floods.

Three weeks have now passed and Lismore STILL has no power, nor do other nearby areas.



**PLEASE HELP
SAVE
THE KOALAS**

www.givenow.com.au/koalacrisis

AFA FEEDING HOMELESS PETS

As it soon became obvious that with almost 3,500 homes in Lismore and surrounds declared un-inhabitable, many people would be homeless. And many would simply refuse to give up their animals.

A major flood recovery centre was set up in Lismore to provide free food for people and for pets. It was soon obvious that more people, groups were needed to help with the enormous demand.

AFA, together with the Animal Welfare League set up pet food hubs in Mullumbimby, Byron, and Brunswick Heads so that people could drop off donations of food. We were soon overwhelmed with offers of food supplies and volunteer drivers as it's a two-hour return trip to Lismore.

Unfortunately, most homeless people living in what shelters are available have no access to refrigerators, power, petrol, or cash as many are living off the \$3,000 grant. So, all pet food had to be in small packets and didn't need refrigeration. Cans had to be self-opening as many don't have

can openers. Big bags of dried cat and dog food, kitty litter were not able to be repacked in smaller containers. We didn't have enough volunteers nor did we want to start polluting with plastic bags.

AFA did a couple of huge shops for pet food at local supermarkets. All taken to Lismore where the goods disappeared within 48 hours. It's clear that the need for pet food will continue for weeks, if not months to come with no real plans to rebuild houses. The NSW government hasn't made any plans to re-house people. Some people who lost their homes in the 2019-2020 bushfires still have no homes.

AFA has worked with Michelle Bryant who has done a wonderful job in organising food drops. What's needed



is a functioning team dedicated to dealing with the emergency. Unfortunately, the charity has a huge workload and we're hoping that there will be a workable plan to feed pets developed as the crisis will continue for months.

One big lesson out of this disaster has

been the absolute lack of any emergency planning. AFA, Animal Welfare League, PETA and other groups involved in providing pet food, shelters and foster care will get together when things settle down to plan for emergencies so this chaos never happens again.

TIME FOR A PEACEFUL REVOLUTION

BECAUSE NOTHING ELSE IS GOING TO SAVE KOALAS

As it soon became obvious that with almost 3,500 homes in Lismore and surrounds declared un-inhabitable, many people would be homeless. And many would simply refuse to give up their animals.

The NSW National Resources Commission is with-holding a critically important document entitled 'Final report coastal IFOA operations post 2019/2020 wildfires' completed in June 2021 detailing the damage to state forests as a result of the catastrophic bushfires. The report has been kept secret, marked cabinet-in-confidence and is only available via leaked information.

The document contains damning evidence of government irresponsibility and major environmental problems.

The report calls for moratoriums on a number of state forests which have sustained appalling damage. Yet forests identified as at extreme risk with recommendations that harvesting be suspended for three

years continue to be logged.

Other forest management zones assessed at high and medium risk with recommendations for temporary refuges and additional measures designed to protect remaining forests are being logged without implementation of the recommendations.

As a result of the report being classified as a cabinet-in-confidence document, its contents are immune from GIPA (freedom of information) requests and will not be tabled in Parliament until such time as the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces approves the release.

Under provisions of the Natural Resources Commission Act, the report is supposed to be released in a "reasonable time". NSW L-NP



government definition of a reasonable time could mean a number of years, if not a decade. Legal challenges offer little hope of obtaining the document.

AFA has submitted a number of freedom of information requests and one particular document which the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) provided demonstrates why every voter in NSW who is concerned about forest wildlife should be very worried.

A key report demonstrated "that even with very modest wildfire and

harvesting impact assumptions, the population of yellow-bellied glider in the forest compartments (which AFA is legally focused on) is at high risk of local extinction, which is taxing on the broader metapopulation. Extreme precaution should be applied to any timber harvest planning in the particular State Forest to prevent local extinction of yellow-bellied glider."

Needless to say, logging is continuing in these compartments in spite of the EPA report which Forestry corporation has ignored.

POLITICAL KOALA HUG THE BETRAYAL

It is absolutely sickening to watch Morrison slurp a koala, as though he cares about our wildlife. At the same time, his government is attempting to split Australia into ten regions for mining and fossil fuel industries. In these regions, there'll be no need for any semblance of environmental assessments.

When any national koala recovery plan finally comes out (no doubt before the May election), it will be yet another verbose document which completely fails to address the real problem – loss of habitat!

The draft national recovery program fails to deal with climate change in any meaningful way, ignores industrial logging and massive urbanisation.

Both Morrison and Perrottet and Albanese (and probably all Labour premiers/party as well) support an Australian population of 50 million.

As our economy now relies on fossil fuel and growth, the future of this ancient continent looks grimmer every day.

There's simply no reality at the political level. The Greens have failed wildlife. In spite of the NSW Upper House Inquiry which restricted access to organisations such as AFA with its 30 plus year history of research and koala campaigns, the loss of biodiversity has not been a focus of either state or federal greens.

Nor is the greens population policy a recognition that there has to be a limit

to the number of people this country can carry, End of story. Population growth is killing the planet.

Climate change and biodiversity go hand in hand. Australia is in the front line of impacts yet there is still not a single policy at state or federal government level which addresses the very serious impacts which are only going to get worse as a result of a warming planet.

NSW government has steadfastly refused to create the Great Koala National Park, the only real measure that has any chance of seeing koalas survive in this state. Queensland is a basket case and there has been no effort by the Palaszczuk government to address the ongoing appalling loss of habitat and koalas. Just more and more strategies, useless papers.

AFA downloaded the Victorian draft koala strategy which is truly a disgrace. With not a shred of scientifically acceptable evidence, grandiose claims of a huge population are made. The draft is so bad its almost laughable.



DIFFICULT TIMES

Just know that AFA is working hard, doing the job as best we can.

Good people are coming together and the love of animals during this flood crisis has been a shining inspiration.

Animals unconditional love is changing consciousness, so many people care. A real blessing for us all.

For the Animals, Sue Arnold & Friends



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