

Koalas just hanging on

Tree clearing is wiping out species

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MORE than 5000 koalas have been killed in Queensland in the past four years because of mass tree clearing, new research has revealed.

A just released WWF briefing paper reported at least 5184 koalas were killed between 2012 and 2016 due to bulldozing of habitat across the state.

Figures show koala deaths have increased from 503 in 2010-11 to 1796 in 2015-16 because of loss of habitat.

RSPCA Queensland chief executive Mark Townend said wildlife hospitals across the state were dealing with thousands of injured and suffering animals each year

because of tree clearing. "We're seeing open-slaughter destruction of wildlife habitat and it has to stop," Mr Townend said.

"The mass suffering, injury and needless deaths of wild animals caused by the bulldozing of their forest homes is largely hidden but it is Queensland's greatest animal welfare crisis."

Southeast Queensland was reported as having a higher than natural death rate from "vehicles, predators, disease and privation in the fragmented forests that remain".

WWF-Australia chief executive Dermot O'Gorman has called on the State Government to do more to

protect koala populations across Queensland.

"That is a devastating loss for a species listed as vulnerable in Queensland and where populations around Brisbane have collapsed by 50-80 per cent in less than 20 years," he said. "It's a national tragedy and an international embarrassment.

"So long as the damage done to environment laws by the previous Queensland government remains unfixed, koalas will continue to die in increasing numbers."

A projection of a koala was displayed on the side of Next Hotel in Brisbane's CBD on Wednesday night to highlight the plummeting numbers of koalas.