The current systems in place to protect threatened species are not working, I believe this is mainly because the safeguards and procedures set up are not being followed and there seem to be no mechanisms, other than environmental groups going through the courts, to make sure that plans and agreements are followed properly. These safeguards and procedures were set up by governments and are being broken by governments.
Victoria is a good example of this problem. East Gippsland Environment group were forced to take Vic forests to the high court to stop illegal logging in the browns Mountain case. They are currently in the courts suing Vic forests again for illegal logging of rainforest habitat. The DSE has also sued Vic forests through the courts for illegal logging and the DSE itself has been sued. My environment recently took Vic forests to court over the Toolangi forest logging and Vic forest subsequently change their plans for logging in the area. Small groups should not be forced to uphold the law. These groups in their endeavour to stop illegal logging are often arrested by police at the bequest of the group who are breaking the law. This is a situation that should never occur in an open democratic country. And in cases where this has been wrong there has been no redress.
Forestry managers are suppose to survey areas before logging to make sure there are no endangered species. This is not done. Surveys if done at all are done by a person sitting at a computer looking at modelling of habitat types, this should never be in place of thorough on the ground independent flora and fauna surveys. It is much easier for forestry managers who have a vested interest in logging areas to not find endangered species, laws need to be made with this in mind. Independent surveys are a must. A law making a survey compulsory must be backed up with a penalty if no survey is found to have been done, or if a survey is found to not have been done properly. Someone needs to check that this is done, this role should not be fulfilled by individual citizens.
In the Toolangi case brought by My environment it was unclear in the Leadbeater's possum action plan what constituted a hollow bearing tree . The judge said an urgent review was needed. This hasn't been done even though the Leadbeater's possum is facing extinction and much of it's habitat was burnt in the 2009 fires. This beautiful animal really shows the problem we are facing. A rich country like Australia can save the Leadbeater's Possum. But the problem is, it's habitat is being logged to make paper. We chip the logs and sell them for almost nothing and in the process loose something that is invaluable. The Victorian government, rather than being alarmed by the rapid decline of this species is considering further weakening environmental protection for it. This type of mismanagement of valuable Australian heritage cannot be allowed.
The RFA and endangered species action plans were designed to end decades of fighting over the forests. But the rules of the RFA's are being habitually broken by government agencies and nothing is done about this unless environmental groups can raise the funds to go to court.
Some of the rules regarding endangered species are simply absurd. Currently their is a proposal for a large and expanded open cut coal mine in Leard State forest NSW. This is an area home to 21 threatened bird species and the now endangered Koala. The environment minister in ruling on this case does not have to consider the fact that the Koala habitat is threatened because the species was not listed as endangered at the time of the mining proposal. This is ridiculous and shows the lack of understanding of the process of species becoming endangered. The date of the proposal has no bearing on the ultimate outcomes for the Koala. This certainly calls into question whether the laws are there to protect the endangered species or the mining interests.
In Queensland the extent of development in the world heritage great barrier reef area has led to the extraordinary situation of UNESCO saying that the reef will be "in danger" within the next year. UNESCO called on the federal government to have a plan for the whole area and only look at projects as part of that whole. This has not been done. You can only imagine the level of behind the scenes lobbying that would have preceded such an announcement. The fact that UNESCO felt it had no other course available to protect the reef other than public condemnation of the mismanagement by Australian governments says a lot about what our environmental protections are not doing. The laws we currently have are not enough to even protect the world heritage icon , the Great Barrier Reef and it took an outside international organisation to highlight this. This is not good enough.
The situation in WA with the development at James Price Point is farcical. The EPA assessment had

to be made by one man. The board was so loaded with pro development that they were unable to even make the decision. This of course didn't deter the WA government,who of course appointed the board, they allowed the process to go ahead with just one member of the board. This process shows why environmental laws and processes need to be strengthened not weakened. The whole EPA process has been hijacked by a government determined to have a project approved regardless of the environmental impact. When the system can be so easily corrupted it is essential that there are checks in place by another tier of government.

The laws as they stand are not protecting endangered species. This is probably because they are not being carried out to their full extent if at all. Weakening laws that are currently not being enforced is not the way to protect our endangered species. These laws need to be fully implemented with follow up and consequences for non compliance. Without stronger protection we will see a wave of extinction throughout Australia and we will lose the places we love.

When citizens are the ones enforcing the laws by raising money to go through the courts something is terribly wrong.

Kylie Jones.