



Habitat clearing threatens bay koalas

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THE Queensland Government faces charges of hypocrisy after it cleared prime eucalypt habitat along Redland City in southeast Queensland's Koala Coast.

Koala numbers have crashed in [Redland City](#) and other southeast strongholds, so much so Premier Anna Bligh was prompted last year to announce she would do everything to ensure the animals survived.

But with the recent clearing of a 6ha site at Thornlands, on Brisbane's bayside, leaving nothing but a handful of trees and torn stumps, some have questioned Ms Bligh's intentions.

Redland City councillor [Debra Henry](#) said she wrote twice to Ms [Bligh](#), Education Minister [Geoff Wilson](#) and Natural Resources Minister [Stephen Robertson](#), warning them about the land's conservation values and offering advice on vegetation issues.

While the land, intended for a school, was being cleared last week, the Government was pushing legislation through Parliament stopping farmers bulldozing regrowth in north Queensland.

Cr Henry yesterday said although the Government was within its legal rights to clear the site, the development could have gone ahead with a much lesser environmental impact.

A spokeswoman for Mr Wilson said council was involved in the planning process, two rounds of consultation took place and appropriate approvals were in place.

Detailed assessments were undertaken, including traffic and environmental valuations relating specifically to the impact on koala habitat.

"The design of the school will incorporate landscaping that flows through the site to create a safe environment for koalas to cross," the spokeswoman said.

Cr Henry said she believed council concerns about environmental and planning issues were not adequately addressed.

"Developers will be falling over themselves to get similar deals with the Government whereby they face none of the usual scrutiny," she said.

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"A court fined (Redlands) quarry operator Karreman Bros \$200,000 for clearing koala habitat which shows how tough things can be for private operators.

"The extent of development is entirely inconsistent with the Redland planning scheme and this is grossly contradictory to the stated intentions of the Government.

"Without trees, there are no koalas. What a message to send to the community. They've since sent us a letter asking us to pay 50 per cent of offsite infrastructure costs.

"This hypocrisy should be exposed and the law changed so they have to adhere to their own rules, and they should have to plant trees to offset what they have cleared."

The Government also clear-felled land in the 1990s to build the nearby Hilliards State School.