



## Koala Beach Should Stand as a Line in the Sand for Developers

As Australia recovers from its “summer of sorrow”, many questions have been raised about how new development has been allowed to occur in flood prone areas and, particularly, why both history and science was overlooked in planning these communities.

This is a theme very close to the heart of Deborah Tabart OAM, CEO of the Australian Koala Foundation (AKF).

For many years Ms Tabart has been urging the development industry to lift the bar on sustainable living, for the benefit of human and wildlife inhabitants, in communities across Australia, but it falls on deaf ears.

“I will be exceptionally disappointed if there are no lessons learned, if governments and development interests revert to ‘business as usual’, without asking themselves ‘how did this happen?’” says Ms Tabart.

Ms Tabart can speak with some authority on what is needed to achieve sustainable communities, with the AKF having partnered with the Ray Group (a property development company championed by the late Brian Ray), to develop “Koala Beach” near Pottsville in northern NSW. The project commenced in 1993 and the AKF’s involvement is ongoing.

The outcome at Koala Beach has been a world-leading model of economic, cultural and environmental goals all being achieved. The development includes over 270 ha of bushland reserved (from a total of 365 ha) for nature conservation and is home to at least 24 threatened species and ecological communities.

“I am proud that valuable habitat has been protected for all time and special measures are in place to protect the community’s koalas and other natural values”, says Ms Tabart.

“When I read the development industries submission into the *Senate Inquiry into the status, health and sustainability of the koala*, I am shocked to think that they think they have been badly treated in the past. For goodness sake, in South East Queensland alone there have been 25,000 dead koalas to show how balanced it has been,” says Tabart.

She said sustainability to a developer, means “my way or the highway”.

Ms Tabart says she put a proposal to the UDIA ten years ago to 50 of its developers on board to achieve a consensus on long-term sustainability objectives.

“I was told it was all too hard, yet Koala Beach is a great success. I put that down to a long-term vision and scientific research, undertaken before a single foundation was laid. I just don’t understand why other developers cannot aspire to doing the same”, adds Ms Tabart.

Today Koala Beach is home to a small but significant koala population, and several hundred human inhabitants who enjoy an enviable quality of life.

The AKF’s submission is no. 25 and can be found at <http://bit.ly/gQtI ZZ> or [http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/ec\\_ctte/koalas/submissions.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/ec_ctte/koalas/submissions.htm)

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