



## Urban development and planning is failing our Koalas

**Poor urban development and planning legislation is wiping out our Koalas as it fails to protect their vital habitat.**

With Australia's councils raising on average more than 80 per cent of their revenue from rates, fines and service charges, it is no surprise local governments encourage development.

Rezoning land to allow development brings new rate-payers and new revenue for Council.



There is an inherent bias in the system that is fueling industry's expectation; if they own the land, they believe they are entitled to rezone it. AKF would argue that much of this land with high biological value shouldn't have been bought in the first place.

Existing State Koala protection legislation has proved powerless. The Senate Committee investigating the Status of the Koala in 2011 concluded the States were incapable of protecting the Koala.

In much of the country, two inadequate conditions are placed on clearing to protect Koalas: a Koala spotter is required during clearing to ensure no animals are in trees being felled, and sequential clearing, ostensibly to prevent Koalas getting isolated in the last patch of bush. They still do.

But when a Koala loses its home, where does it go?

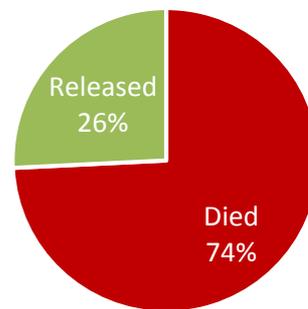
If those Koalas survive the bulldozers, they will likely die as a result of a dog attack, car strike, or worse, slowly starve to death.

Councils suffer from insufficient mapping, poor legislative power, historical approvals,

and green space loopholes. Weak development application conditions and enforcement are further exposing vital habitat to development.

The Australian Koala Foundation's model for Koala-friendly urban development, Koala Beach, proves this doesn't have to be the case. Koala Beach has worked; 500 residential properties sit peacefully with Koalas. So why hasn't industry adopted the principles of Koala beach elsewhere? Why did the Property Council support the concept in the Senate Inquiry, but not in real life?

### Koala Hospital Outcomes in Southeast Queensland 1997-2013



Of 15,000+ Koalas taken into care in SE Queensland between 1997 and 2013, more than 74% died. The only possible result is extinction.



Photo © Dr. Douglas Kerlin



## How the current planning approval system fails Koalas

- A lack of legislative power at local government level means Koala protection is only addressed in policy statements with no concrete solutions provided to protect vital habitat from development.
- Ministerial discretion allows for State Ministers to override councils' planning decisions, in some cases over-ruling concerns about impacts on Koala populations and allowing developments to proceed.
- Poor to non-existent government mapping is one of the main causes of Koala population decline – if vital habitat remains unidentified, then it remains unprotected and open to clearing.
- Historical loopholes continue to provide open-ended approvals, effectively giving industry a free rein to knock down Koala trees. A sunset clause, ensuring these approvals expire after a period of time if the development has not progressed, is desperately needed.
- If the floodplain is a cow paddock, and the high ground is Koala habitat, industry will successfully convince Government the floodplain should be the greenspace, and the high ground be cleared for housing. Drainage lines disguised on paper as “green”, or conservation space, are far too common.
- Poorly defined legislation terminology also provides loopholes for industry.
- In the development approvals process, ‘no’ rarely means ‘no’. Project managers simply grind down the system; they may have to wait years for approval, may have to get told ‘no’ again and again, but a single ‘yes’ and it’s all over.
- Finally, dysfunctional processes in all levels of government confuses authorities’ roles and responsibilities. The knock-on effect of this is their failure to properly police and enforce planning and development guidelines.

## “When a Koala loses its home, where does it go?”

### Koala Protection Act

The Koala Protection Act (KPA) will provide a model for how to reconcile development and conservation.

- Rather than relying on mapping alone to identify Koala habitat, the KPA will reference a tree list; if a tree on the site is a species cited in that tree list, it is protected under the KPA.
- The KPA will require the proponents demonstrate their impact on Koalas and Koala habitat will be benign.

