

# Koala trees under threat

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AN Eerwah Vale doctor fighting proposed high voltage powerlines across his land this week slammed government agency Powerlink for again ignoring koala conservation in the area.

The war of words comes just weeks after residents praised Powerlink for revisiting the issue.

Members of PAGE – Powerlines Action Group Eumundi – said constant campaigning to protect wildlife resulted in the company agreeing to further investigations.

In a letter to affected landowners, Powerlink said that under new koala habitat policies, it would “undertake some additional assessments prior to seeking ministerial designation for the project under the Sustainable Planning Act”.

But Dr Carlos Sanchez said it was nothing but lies.

“I was so happy that Powerlink agreed to undertake more wildlife surveys throughout this area – I really thought they were going to try and protect our local koalas,” he said.

“But it’s all rubbish and Powerlink’s behaviour is just shocking.

“I have recognised koala feeding trees on my land – we



SERIOUS QUESTIONS: Carlos Sanchez at Larneys Lane, Eerwah Vale, is concerned at Powerlink’s actions. Picture: STUART QUINN

know the wildlife is there and will be affected by the Powerlink development.

“But Powerlink didn’t even come onto my land – they stood on the road and looked in. How can you count and mark koalas trees on a property unless you walk it?”

“When I questioned the project manager, he said it

didn’t matter as the information wouldn’t make any difference,” Dr Sanchez said.

Powerlink chief operating officer Simon Bartlett said: “The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared for the Woolooga to Eerwah Vale project has already identified that the area of low-medium value koala

habitat impacted by the proposed route is quite small, and that high value koala habitat will not be impacted.

“The recent field work to estimate the offsets obligation (under new government legislation) does not affect the outcome of the assessments carried out in the final EIS, nor does it

indicate any shortcomings in the original environmental investigations.

“The field work solely involved estimating the number of non-juvenile koala habitat trees that may need to be cleared – it was not necessary to enter every property to undertake this work,” he said.

## Arbitration for Sunbus pay dispute

AFTER months of ongoing dispute, Sunbus parent company Transit Australia Group (TAG) and the Transport Workers Union (TWU) will head to court in Brisbane next week to meet with Fair Work Australia (FWA) in an attempt to resolve their differences.

Earlier this week, Sunbus drivers walked off the job for the fifth time in more than six weeks in an effort to improve their pay conditions.

The base hourly rate for Sunbus drivers is \$19.73.

A TAG spokeswoman said they were trying to transition Sunbus workers to a federal award that moved workers from a base hourly pay to a pay package.

“TAG has called upon FWA to help progress negotiations, as the company does not believe a resolution is achievable without them,” she said.

The spokeswoman said strike action during third party negotiations would be unlikely.

“Obstructing arbitration with industrial action would be highly unusual and irresponsible,” she said.

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