

Road to survival now field of battle



Fragile: Dreamworld koalas Lola and Libby, 8 months.
Picture: Luke Marsden

Developers warn 'endangered' koala will cost jobs

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IT IS the battle of the bulldozer versus a national icon.

At stake is the survival of dwindling numbers of koalas, tens of thousands of jobs and Queensland's fragile economy.

Property developers say a push to list koalas as endangered will threaten an industry which employs 11 per cent of the state's workforce.

But conservation groups claim koalas are staring down the barrel of extinction unless urgent action is taken.

The Urban Development Institute of Australia has told a

Senate inquiry that further protection of koalas was premature and would cost much-needed jobs. UDIA Queensland chief executive Brian Stewart (pictured) said while it was important to protect koalas, decisions had to be made on "sound science" and not "emotion".

"This is not the time to be tinkering with a well thought out, comprehensive state policy," Mr Stewart said.

"The industry desperately needs a level of certainty."

The Property Council of Australia said koalas were adequately protected. But ko-

ala groups are sounding the alarm, pointing to a recent picture of a koala clinging to a bulldozed tree at Worongary on the Gold Coast as evidence

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greater protection was needed.

The Redland-based Koala Action Group said new roads and housing estates had had a dramatic affect on koala numbers in the area. More than

200 were killed by cars every year in southeast Queensland.

The KAG's submission said the State Government was "cramming in" residents and "two major arterial roads have been upgraded to four lanes... this has to be one of the main causes of the catastrophic decline in koala numbers".

And disease was as much a risk to koalas as road traffic, the Australia Zoo Wildlife Warriors' submission said.

When veterinarians tested 37 koalas from the Brendale area, almost half had chlamydiosis - a killer disease.

Al Mucci, general manager

of life sciences at Dreamworld, said the koala was as iconic as the giant panda and had to be saved at all costs.

"The koala is unmistakably Australian," he said.

"This makes koala conservation an imperative of more than just biological and cultural concern, but an issue of national identity, international image and reputation."

The UQ Koala Ecology Group said listing koalas as endangered would at least provide a "speed bump in the road to extinction".

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On the brink: A koala sits in a tree felled by bulldozers for developers on the Gold Coast.