

# Twins want action over koala crisis

By KATHY SUNDSTROM

NAMBOUR: one left. Caloundra: one left. Noosa National Park: two left. Colloom – all gone.

These statistics relate to the alarming decrease in the koala population on the Sunshine Coast.

The region which once provided a haven for koalas has become a graveyard, mostly due to rapid development.

Moffat Beach twins Ray and Murray Chambers have spent the past four years desperately trying to reverse the trend, but their attempts can only achieve so much.

Ray estimated there were only 140 koalas left across the Coast, with most living in the bushy areas around Kenilworth and Peachester.

He couldn't hide his frustration and said governments appeared to be doing nothing as koalas faced extinction.

"Queensland is only 150 years old, but in a blink white man has wiped out the koala," he said.

Last week he rescued six koalas in one day. Only one of those was likely to survive.

"Out of 14 we rescue, probably only two get to go home," Ray said. "It is vandalism. There is a time

when you won't see a koala in south-east Queensland and the government is doing nothing. Koalas are in a diabolical state, but they're not getting any help."

The twins take most of the injured koalas to Australia Zoo's Wildlife Hospital.

A hospital spokeswoman said since becoming operational in 2003, the hospital had treated "over 4477 koalas from all over south-east Queensland and northern NSW".

"With koala numbers in south-east Queensland experiencing a rapid decline, this statistic is alarming for their sustainability," she said.

The twins have written to politicians and have secured a meeting with Member for Glasshouse Andrew Powell on September 1.

While Australians appear to be sitting on their hands, foreign journalists are waking up to the crisis.

British photographer Richard Sowersby, working on behalf of BBC TV, travelled to the Sunshine Coast to witness first-hand the efforts of the Chambers twins.

Since returning home, Mr Sowersby told the rescue service he was "surprised and saddened at the horrendous state of our country's iconic symbol".



**RESCUE TEAM:** Ray and Murray Chambers are deeply concerned for koalas.

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