**Senate Committee Inquiry into the status, health and sustainability of Australia's koala population.**

**Questions on Notice: Property Council of Australia (Residential Development Council)**

## Habitat offsets

Recent work by residential developers to address habitat offset has focused on adequate mapping of vegetation to determine the quality and location of koala habitat. This information is used to protect, preserve and enhance high value habitat rather than denigrated, low quality koala habitat. An example is provided below.

### Example: Koala Beach

In association with The Ray Group, a Gold Coast based developer, the Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) has taken the first steps towards creating a koala-friendly development where a community makes conscious compromises to its lifestyle so that it can co-exist with wild koalas. The development site is located on the northern New South Wales coast, just north of Pottsville.

*Key facts:*

- Koala Beach is home to a small but significant koala population. To ensure the protection of the resident koala colony and other important wildlife a number of initiatives were developed. These included:
    - No cats and dogs within the estate.
    - The inclusion of speed bumps near known koala home ranges.
    - A requirement that all fences within the estate be raised so that koalas and other wildlife can enjoy free access around the estate.
    - The provision that no koala home range or food tree be removed for development purposes.
    - The establishment of a Wildlife and Habitat Management Committee with funding from an environment levy on the rates.
- Out of a total area of 365 hectares, 272.395 hectares have been dedicated intact to conservation.
- The developer and the AKF planted additional food and habitat trees for koalas and other native species living on the site. This is an ongoing project.
- To ensure the conservation of the koalas and other wildlife, an ongoing monitoring and research program was established. Subsequent studies have determined that descendants of the original koala colony have not been adversely affected by the development. Future monitoring will give more information.
- In addition to the koala population, Koala Beach is home to approximately 25 species of endangered or rare flora and fauna, including planigales (a small marsupial), the Queensland blossom bat and a number of threatened microbats, the wallum froglet, glossy black cockatoos, the bush thick-knee and arthraxon hispidus (a threatened grass).
- Despite its early sceptics, Koala Beach has been hailed a success by developers, residents and biologists. It has provided a model for the coexistence of wildlife and humans.

## Habitat destruction

### Example: Fraser Coast Regional Council (10 March 2010)

The Fraser Coast Regional Council successfully prosecuted a Townsville property developer in a landmark environmental protection case in the Magistrate's Court in Hervey Bay in 2010.

*Key facts:*

- The Council instigated legal action against developer, Wulguru Heights Pty Ltd, (part of the Santalucia group of companies), after several Dundowran Beach residents complained about vegetation clearing on freehold beachfront land at Dundowran Beach in May 2008.
- After pleading guilty to clearing vegetation without an effective development permit (under section 4.3.1 of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997)*, Wulguru Heights Pty Ltd was convicted, fined $12,600 and ordered to pay costs of $20,000 to FCRC. The company was also ordered to rehabilitate the cleared land, starting within six months.
- Investigation by the Council's Planning Compliance and Vegetation Management Officers found that the 14 hectares of land where the clearing was undertaken consisted of partially mapped natural areas and regrowth vegetation adjacent to mapped *Of Concern and Essential Habitat (black breasted button quail) ecosystems*. No development applications or approvals existed over the land at the time of the clearing.
- The contractor who carried out the vegetation clearing was to be sentenced as a result of this legal action.