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Rob Mellett

A GROUP of concerned nature lovers are angry a former tree-lined canopy they say was once frequented by koalas remains barren two years after work first began.

Master developer Springfield City Group (SCG) first cut a 40- to 50-metre swathe through trees in January 2022 for a sewer line along Opossum Creek at Brookwater.

North Ipswich local Russell Miller said this now deforested corridor is supposed to form part of the buffer zone for endangered and rare native wildlife if Stockland is approved to clear fell Woogaroo Forest for its Springview Stage 2 and 3 residential developments.

The sewer main stretches for about 1km and crosses the creek five times.

Mr Miller said: "Where once residents had a reasonable chance to see a koala while walking on the path along Opossum Creek, much of it under a tree canopy, now they only see weed infested or hard eroded bare ground," he said.

"I find it more than strange that a state government that boasts it has the toughest environmental laws in Australia and a local government that espouses sustainable development can do nothing and it will be left up to water utility company Queensland Urban Utilities to do something to fix this environmental disaster.

"If Ipswich City Council and the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation do not have any power to intervene here, the laws must be changed."

Mr Miller said there had been a spike in the number of koala rescues following the construction of the sewer main.

"Using publicly available data from the RSPCA in the two years before the sewer main construction, there were three koala rescues in the suburbs immediately surrounding Woogaroo Forest," Mr Miller said.

"All three involved either chlamydia or cystitis.

"In the two years since construction began, there have been six rescues, five of which involved chlamydia or cystitis and one vehicle strike.

"All five chlamydia or cystitis cases resulted in the koalas being euthanised.

"It is only when a koala is under stress that it manifests itself in clinical symptoms and sickness.

"I do not claim that this is indisputable proof of a link between the increase in the number of sick koalas and the sewer construction, however, I believe the clear-felling of the pathway for the sewer, the loud noises of the chippers and earth moving equipment would certainly cause the necessary stress to any koala in the way of or near the path of the construction."

A spokeswoman for Queensland Urban Utilities told the *Tribune* earlier this year that it wanted to see the Opossum Creek site restoration works completed as quickly as possible.

"Springfield City Group carried out the works and is responsible for ensuring that all relevant codes, legislation and other approval conditions are met," they said.

"The developer has been given the opportunity to provide a plan to address the concerns about the

RSPCA Queensland Wildlife Veterinary Director Tim Portas said the number of koala rescues had doubled in Brookwater from 2022-2023 to 2023-24.

“There was also an increase in sick/injured koalas in the general Ipswich area, with the number of koalas coming into RSPCA Queensland’s Wildlife Hospital rising from 21 (22-23 FY) to 24 (23-24 FY),” he said.



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