

[Home](#) » [News](#) » United front stands against forest bulldozing

## News

# United front stands against forest bulldozing

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Rob Mellett

THE peak body for Queensland conservation joined grassroots community groups and Ipswich locals on Sunday to spearhead the launch of the Save Woogaroo Forest campaign.

Queensland Conservation Council Urban Sustainability expert Jen Basham highlighted the environmental significance of the 160ha of bushland at Springfield alongside respected Bellbird Park ecologist Keith McCosh, the Ipswich Koala Protection Society's Rebecca Larkin and naturalist Russell Eley.

More than 100 residents convened at an Augustine Heights café and were shown drone footage of female koala "Tanya", who was seen in trees at Woogaroo Forest on Saturday.

The koala has been named after Federal Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek, who residents hope will intervene to save the land.

Mr McCosh said interest was snowballing in saving the last decent-sized block of bush which contains the Woogaroo Scrub, a zone of rare rainforest, and endangered flora and fauna.

Developer Stockland wants to build around 1,800 homes on the land and bulldoze the ridgelines by 14m, resulting in a 40m reduction in the height of views from Brookwater if the trees disappear.

Despite hundreds of objections against the housing development, Ipswich Council boss Sonia Cooper rubber stamped the first part of the plan while the council was in caretaker mode.

Mr McCosh said the community could not afford to lose any more native bushland.

"All the trees around here were cut down because Woogaroo Forest acted as a defacto environmental reserve – and now they want to knock this last bit down as well," he said.

"I can no longer stand by and say 'yeah, it is okay' to let koalas disappear.

"This is my backyard too."

Ms Larkin said Ipswich koalas were unique because they had adapted to the drier, hotter conditions and would eat the leaves of the Ironbark tree, which its Brisbane counterparts would not.

The action group now wants to convince the government to ditch the decades' old Springfield Structure Plan which exempts koalas and all wildlife from protection.

The vision is to build a chain of protected forest areas linking the 160ha-plus site with other neighbouring bushland, creating a 400ha equivalent of the Toohey Forest for the Ipswich region.

QCC's Jen Basham said the Queensland Conservation Council would now campaign beside the community.

"This is a wonderful bunch of locals who we really need to get behind," she said.

"The fight is on, and it is a fight to be had because this development is not a done deal.

"We must push to get a better outcome for the environment, our local communities, and future generations – not just for our kids, but for the non-human life who lives there too.

"This is a critical area for endangered koalas, and we support seeing it protected into perpetuity.

"I encourage all people who care about this forest, to reach out, offer support, and get involved.

State Member for Jordan Charis Mullen and State Member for Oxley Milton Dick were invited to attend the meeting but were not present.

To find out more, go to the Save Woogaroo Forest Facebook page to join the conversation, and click on the QR code to sign the petition.

Make your views known by emailing Ipswich Mayor Teresa Harding on [mayor@ipswich.qld.gov.au](mailto:mayor@ipswich.qld.gov.au) and email officials at the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act on [epbc.referrals@environment.gov.au](mailto:epbc.referrals@environment.gov.au).

Go to the QCC website to join the campaign at <https://www.queenslandconservation.org.au/>



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