

Koala stoush developing

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THE battle over the protection of koalas is heating up, with activists accusing the State Government of failing to do its homework on the animals' perilous condition.

Australian Koala Foundation executive director Deb Tabart yesterday said she was appalled that Premier Campbell Newman had labelled Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke's move to list koalas as vulnerable as merely green tape.

Mr Newman was backed by Deputy Premier Jeff Seeney, who yesterday ramped up the issue, saying the protection would hinder development and inhibit growth and that it was an unnecessary duplication of an LNP promise to protect koalas.

"The State Government will always ensure koala populations are protected and habitats are maintained," Mr Seeney said.

Developers already were required to carry out environmental impact assessments and koala protection was guaranteed in that process under state planning regulatory provisions.

Ms Tabart said 25,000 koalas had died under the planning provisions and the green tape angle was nonsense because no further documentation would be needed from developers.

She said the Government's attitude reflected the political



FUR FLIES: How the story has been reported.

push to devolve federal environment powers down to state or local level.

"Newman's comments are predictable," she said. "I've received a deluge of emails from people who are outraged.

"His are last century's views. Coming out with the old green tape line sounds fabulous but he doesn't realise how enlightened a lot of voters are these days."

Queensland Resources Council chief executive Michael Roche said the industry was proud of its record in protecting koalas.

He agreed with Mr Seeney that the listing was an extra layer of regulation because miners already put aside habitat or provided offsets.

"This is something we do day in and day out," he said.

Australian National University Centre for Climate Law and Policy associate director Andrew Macintosh said it was unlikely that many developments would be stopped.



LEAF US ALONE: A battle is brewing between the new State Government and koala activists.