

Speeding fines blow for wildlife rescuers

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POLICE have defended themselves against claims they are putting native wildlife at risk by being inflexible towards a Coast animal rescue group.

Sunshine Coast Koala Wildlife Rescue volunteer Ray Chambers has been hit with three speeding fines in just one month while rushing to save the lives of badly injured koalas.

Mr Chambers, who operates the rescue service with his twin brother Murray, attempted to have the fines waived without success.

The first infringement was recorded while he was rescuing a six-year-old koala critically injured after being mauled by a dog at Currumbin.

The second patient was a female koala who had lost her eye after being struck by a car.

The third patient was another female found dazed and not moving at a property near a national park.

While both female koalas died, the male remains a patient at Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital.

Mr Chambers received the speeding fines in the mail and immediately wrote to police to have them set aside under the "emergency situation" section of the Criminal Code.

With that request denied, he



CLIMBING COSTS: Volunteer Ray Chambers has been fined for speeding on his way to help injured koalas.

PHOTO: GEOFF POTTER

stands to lose five points off his licence and several hundred dollars worth of fines.

He said he was still seeking legal advice from specialist consultants.

"There is a fight to have koalas listed as endangered due to the decline in population," Mr Chambers said.

"I feel that numbers have so declined that their life is more important."

North Coast Region police traffic co-ordinator Steve Maney defended the police service's actions, saying he loved animals as much as anyone.

"Legislation provides special pro-

visions for emergency vehicles to travel under code to emergencies," Inspector Maney said.

"There are multiple people in all directions involved in the decision process allowing vehicles to travel by code, not one individual thinking this is a situation where time is of the essence."