## Koala sex threat 'critical'

**Brian Williams** ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

SOUTHEAST Queensland they set the priorities," she said. koalas are at similar risk of being wiped out by disease as Tasmanian devils, says a research scientist.

allocated only \$400,000 for from scientists. koala disease research and the Commonwealth \$785,000. compared with \$22 million for work on a facial tumour disease killing Tassie devils.

inquiry into koalas. Australia Zoo researcher Jo Loader says up to 67 per cent of sexually active female koalas in some areas are infertile due to chlamydia.

Ms Loader said the level and severity of disease was almost other species.

"The application of more funding for disease research is critical," she said.

State Environment Minister Kate Jones said vesterday \$45 million was being spent on koala projects, with most of the rehabilitate habitat.

\$400,000 had been allocated to disease research and she hoped the Federal Government would contribute.

"I recognise research is the koala populations hard."

smallest component of the funding but I took guidance from the Koala Taskforce and

"They wanted the bulk spent on habitat"

Ms Jones said if funding priorities had changed she Despite this, Queensland has would be keen to hear about it

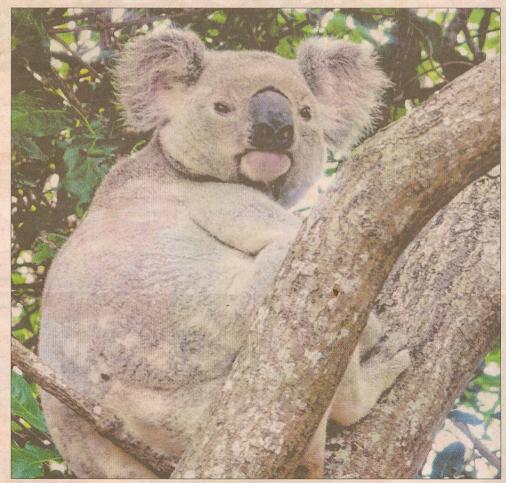
Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke said that over six vears the Australian Research Council had provided \$785,000 to investigate the origin of the In a submission to a Senate retroviral invasion of the koala genome, investigate transmission of the retroviral invasion and for research into developing an chlamydia vaccine.

A submission by Central Queensland University koala specialist Alistair Melzer said disease in any wild species was unprecedented compared with normal and had a role in keeping populations in check.

Dr Melzer said koalas would remain at risk until population growth and resource extraction either plateaued or declined.

He said a consequence of development was an unrelenting mortality from road deaths money going to buy and and dog attacks as koalas moved across habitat that had Of that money, about been separated by high-volume traffic corridors.

> Dr Melzer said long-term drought in the 1990s, tree decline and fire had hit regional



FUNDS NEEDED: Scientists are undertaking research to develop an chlamydia vaccine.