

Rescuer calls for fences to save koalas

By NICOLE FUGE

DAWN was breaking last Saturday when Ray Chambers pulled over on the Bruce Highway at Forest Glen.

He was there to rescue a koala he had named Chelsea.

Ray and his brother Murray, of Sunshine Coast Koala Wildlife Rescue, were called out on Friday to rescue the koala, who was crossing the Bruce Highway from the western side.

"It was getting dark," Ray said. "She was right on the edge of the road and there were trucks hammering along ... it was very scary.

"She climbed the big skinny pine trees. We had a go at rescuing her but couldn't get her.

"We let her settle down and decided to go back first thing in the morning."

But when he got out of the car on Saturday morning he copped a kick in the guts. "There she was, dead on the road. It was about 5am, rigor mortis hadn't even set in, she was still bleeding from the mouth," Ray said, his voice cracking.

"I really felt gutted, I felt like I had let this koala down."

What was even more heartbreaking

for Ray was that Chelsea was the third koala to be killed on the highway at Forest Glen in the last eight months.

Boiling with rage, Ray has been lobbying the State Government to put in koala fencing along the Bruce Highway south of the Caloundra turnoff and north of the Sippy Downs turnoff, through Forest Glen.

He also wants to see fencing installed along Steve Irwin Way.

He would also like to see the speed limit reduced along the Bruce Highway through Forest Glen and along Steve Irwin Way.

"If a koala gets hit at 60km or more it's going to be fatal anyway, but if you drop the speed limit you will have better control to hopefully avoid hitting a koala," Ray said.

"The question is, why weren't fences put in along Steve Irwin Way when they did the upgrade?

"Everything's wrong in that corridor (through Forest Glen), it's the busiest road on the Sunshine Coast for koalas."

If you see any sick, injured, orphaned or dead koalas, contact Sunshine Coast Koala Wildlife Rescue on 0423 618 740 or 0431 300 729.



ANGRY: Ray Chambers, from Sunshine Coast Koala Wildlife Rescue, is calling for fencing of koala corridors on the Bruce Highway and Steve Irwin Way.

PHOTO: CHE CHAPMAN