

# Native forest permit insists on koala spotter

By **PETER GARDINER**

TREE clearing beside Emu Mountain Rd west of Peregian in a koala habitat is being investigated by the Department of Environment and Resource Management.

A DERM spokesman said the department is aware of the clearing which is being carried out under a native forest practice permit.

He said the land owner is required to harvest native timber for commercial sale under strict requirements.

“They are required to have a koala spotter on site during any clearing to ensure no animals were harmed or displaced,” the spokesman said.

“This property has been previously investigated.

“Investigations at the time found that the timber harvesting was consistent with the requirements of the native forest practice permit,” he said.

Local Sunshine Coast councillor Vivien Griffin said council had had concerns connected with

this land parcel for many years and had done everything in its power to ensure the environmental values of the land were preserved there.

Cr Griffin said the matter of wildlife protections under the state permit was a matter for DERM to enforce and council was at a loss to understand why the department was not pursuing local clearing concerns more vigorously.

The councillor said that a claim for compensation sought by the owners for

alleged loss of the land’s development value has now been dismissed.

The land which is being cleared north west of Murdering Creek Rd is part of a 155ha parcel bought in 1975 at Weyba Downs for planned subdivision. In 1996 the then Maroochy Council introduced a strategic plan which saw the majority of land, which had been designated mostly urban, changed to a mixture of land use designations.

Most was deemed rural

or valued habitat, with the northern portion designated conservation. Some of the eastern land was designated agricultural protection.

A 2008 valuation put the land value before the 1996 strategic plan at \$4.7 million, but this had allegedly fallen after the implementation of the plan to \$750,000. A compensation claim was rejected by council and this decision has since been upheld by the Planning and Environment Court.



**Councillor Vivien Griffin.**