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**Koala rescue:** Queensland Trust for Nature general manager Ben O'Hara speaks about rescued koalas Bro and Blondie Bumstead becoming the first to be released to a new 380ha private koala sanctuary at Peak Crossing.

RESCUED koalas Bro and Blondie Bumstead became the first yesterday to be released to a new 380ha private koala sanctuary at Peak Crossing.

Under a \$1 million project, not-for-profit environment group Queensland Trust for Nature (QTFN) purchased the old grazing property mid-last year and has prepared it as a protected, fenced sanctuary.

The site off Mt Flinders Road has established spotted gums and an existing koala population.

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Ipswich Koala Protection Society vice president Marilyn Spletter had hand-raised Blondie since June after its mother was attacked and killed by two dogs.

She said releasing the 18-month-old koala yesterday was a bittersweet experience.

"They take a bit of your heart when you let them go," Mrs Spletter said.

Following months of TLC and a four week stint in koala kindy at the Moggill Koala Hospital, Blondie was ready to be returned to the wild.

"Blondie Bumstead was my baby that I got very tiny at 250g. She is hand-raised and she is one of my babies but it is just wonderful to see her released on this property," she said.

QTFN general manager Ben O'Hara said Koala Crossing reserve, would be a release site for local rescues to add to a growing koala colony.

The group has put a nature refuge covenant over the property so the habitat could not be destroyed.

"This is part of the greater Flinders Karawatha Corridor which is the largest open track eucalypt forest between Brisbane and the New South Wales border," Mr O'Hara said.

"With the continued pressure of development to the coast, it is these types of corridors that we need to maintain for the ongoing survival of koalas.

"Without these unfortunately urban pressures from dogs and cars will continue to lead to the koala's decline and we won't see them in southeast Queensland in 20 years' time.

"The koala is an iconic species of Australia and there is less than 100,000 left. Unless we can actually stop the decline and reverse it we are going to lose one of the world's best known icons for Australia.

"Areas such as Peak Crossing, southeast Queensland, that are traditional habitat for the koalas is essential to provide as much protected areas as possible."

Mr O'Hara said the site had been put on the market and was viewed as a risk to environmentally sensitive land.

"This property already supports an existing koala population. It was an old grazing property where the owner had not cleared the revegetation. An incoming owner had the right to bulldoze and clear to take it back to a grazing property again.