

# Hope for sick koalas

AUSTRALIA'S dwindling koala population could receive better treatment for diseases, thanks to new genetic research.

The study, led by Dr Rebecca Johnson from the Australian Museum and Professor Peter Timms from the Queensland University of Technology, has worked out the initial sequencing of the koala genome.

Prior to that, very little was known about their immune system, Professor Timms said.

The data was helping researchers understand why Queensland and NSW koalas had been crippled by the spread of chlamydia, while Victorian populations



**THREATENED SPECIES:** Koala populations are in decline.

were virtually unaffected.

“Chlamydia is a major killer of koalas and it also makes them infertile,” Professor Timms said.

“Because of this genome sequence we can now measure the immune response to current vaccines and tailor them better.”