




Speech By
Hon. Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Koala Protection

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (9.42 am): The Newman government is committed to providing strong environmental management supporting sustainable economic development. The 2013-14 budget will ensure we continue to grow the economy by cutting red tape, helping business create jobs, implementing those practical programs that will uphold environmental standards and providing funding for grassroots environmental projects across the state. The \$171.1 million operating budget of the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection will ensure that it continues to deliver strong outcomes for the state's natural and built environments. Specifically, \$78.6 million is allocated towards conservation efforts in my department alone. We are also committed to protecting Queensland's iconic species, including South-East Queensland's koala population. In 2013-14 the Newman government will continue its Koala Habitat Program with an \$11.7 million commitment to increase available koala habitat through strategic land acquisitions in South-East Queensland. As members will know, the aim of the program is to create new koala habitat, to increase the connectivity of South-East Queensland's mature koala habitat and to provide additional recreational opportunities for the community wherever possible.

Expressions of interest will be sought in 2013-14 for eligible property owners to identify suitable properties for purchase under this program. This significant funding commitment is part of the government's \$26.5 million commitment to protect the future of koalas. It follows this year's funding announcement of \$3.2 million in research grants to investigate koala diseases and other preventable causes of death, injury and illness. I might just reflect that last week it was great to be out at my alma mater, the University of Queensland, announcing with Bill Ellis and Steve Johnston significant funding going to the University of Queensland, QUT and Griffith University. I also want to acknowledge that this year we have started the rollout of our \$800,000 koala rescue and rehabilitation service funding to grassroots carers on the front line collecting our injured and sick koalas making sure that they are rehabilitated and returned to the wild. Through this ongoing funding commitment the Newman government is providing real and practical outcomes to conserve Queensland's koala population by securing koala habitat, addressing disease and improving our recovery and rehabilitation efforts.