




Speech By
Charis Mullen

MEMBER FOR JORDAN

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INNOVATION, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (3.03 pm): I am pleased to speak on the Auditor-General's report No. 7 relating to conserving threatened species. As referenced in the report, Australia is home to between 600,000 and 700,000 native species, many of which are unique to Australia. The diversity and geographical range of Queensland's wildlife present challenges in conserving threatened species and we know that native flora and fauna are in decline. As the report indicates, addressing that decline is complex and requires a targeted and coordinated approach across multiple agencies to manage threats and conserve habitats.

The QAO's audit assessed whether Queensland public sector entities are effectively identifying, protecting and conserving threatened species, with the audit primarily focused on the Department of Environment and Science. The audit was certainly very thorough, as is expected of a QAO report, with the process involving interviews with staff in the relevant departments, document review and data analysis, and interviews with key stakeholders and experts. The QAO also undertook site visits to two nature refuges in Central Queensland and considered 31 written submissions from stakeholders, including universities, conservation groups, wildlife parks and individuals.

The Auditor-General made a number of findings and seven recommendations in the final report. Those were accepted by the director-general of the Department of Environment and Science, with an acknowledgement that improvements are needed in the areas of listing, the common assessment method, and conservation planning and oversight.

There was also an interesting observation made by the QAO report in relation to what happens when a particular government sharply changes policy direction and where we now find ourselves. In 2010, the former department of environment and resource management developed and issued a draft strategy in relation to the conservation of threatened species. That document, *Building nature's resilience: a biodiversity strategy for Queensland* was, according to the QAO report, 'well researched and developed and identified a holistic approach to conserving biodiversity'. The department finalised the strategy in 2011, yet it was never implemented. Perhaps a change of government had something to do with that.

I am pleased to see that once again we are very focused on the issue of threatened species. The Palaszczuk government is developing a new biodiversity conservation strategy to offer a new direction to threatened species conservation that ensures a coordinated and strategic approach. Since accepting the findings of the Auditor-General's report, the department has made progress to improve the effectiveness in identifying, protecting and recovering Queensland's threatened species. I draw the attention of the parliament particularly to recommendation Nos 1, 3, 4 and 7, which I am advised have been achieved. The process for listing threatened species has been enhanced. The governance and processes for the common assessment method have been strengthened and the Queensland government continues to work with the Commonwealth government and state and territory jurisdictions to implement obligations under the common assessment method memorandum of understanding.

Improvements to the process for listing threatened species, including encouraging nominations, have been made more transparent by the publication of information on the process, its purpose and its governance on DES's website. There are also several threatened species recovery programs that are helping animals such as the northern hairy-nosed wombat, the greater bilby and the Richmond birdwing butterfly, to name a few. Those are all having a positive impact on the recovery of those species and our government's recent announcement around further funding will continue that great work. Recently the minister announced 29 successful projects that protect threatened species, under the \$18 million Community Sustainability Action grants.

Meeting the recommendations of the QAO report, developing a new biodiversity strategy and funding on-the-ground projects will no doubt go a very long way in helping us to protect our most vulnerable flora and fauna. I commend the report to the House.