

**Question on Notice
No. 856
Asked on 18 August 2004**

QUESTION:

MR RICKUSS asked the Minister for the Environment (Mr Mickel)—

For each of the last two financial years and for the year to date:

- (a) What is the total area that has been subjected to a “planned burn” or proposed to undergo a “planned burn” in the future; and
- (b) What funding has been allocated for fire mitigation in the protected area estate?

ANSWER:

- a) For the 2004-05 fire year, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) has approved a planned burn program of nearly 800,000 hectares of QPWS parks and forests.

To date, the QPWS has achieved some 247,000 hectares of its planned burn program.

Previous years' planned burning was:

- 2003-04 - approximately 525,000 hectares; and
- 2002-03 - approximately 406,403 hectares.

- b) For 2004-05 a total of \$ 5.5 million has been allocated for fire management across the QPWS parks and forests.

Previous years' estimated expenditure for fire management was:

- 2003-04 - \$5.0 million; and
- 2002-03 - \$4.8 million.

Mitigating the risk to life and property from wildfires is a priority for the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) in managing its estate. Each year QPWS staff put in place a high degree of preparedness for fire management.

As promised prior to the last election, an additional \$0.5M will be spent on fire management activities on parks and forests managed by the QPWS during 2004-05. This money will bring the total funds spent by QPWS on fire management across the State to \$5.5M.

For the 2004 fire year, the QPWS plans to conduct more than 400 separate planned burns involving more than 800,000 hectares of its lands across the

State. Whilst planned burning often serves multiple purposes, some 190 individual burns totalling an area of nearly 186,000 hectares, will specifically target the reduction of fuel loads on parks and forests to manage the risk associated with potential wildfires.

As well as planned burning, QPWS staff undertake a range of activities each year which contribute to fire management. These include:

- development and review of fire plans, strategies, planned burn programs and wildfire response procedures;
- development and maintenance of extensive networks of firebreaks and trails;
- ongoing staff training and maintenance of fire fighting accreditations;
- coordination with lessees and neighbours in the development of fire management strategies;
- pre-season liaison and briefings with other fire agencies such as the Rural Fire Service, the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries – Forestry and local government authorities; and
- provision and maintenance of appropriate fire equipment including personal protective equipment.

In periods of high fire danger, the QPWS also introduces fire restrictions and public access closures on parks and forests to ensure visitor safety.

A close working relationship is maintained with the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and local councils to enhance co-operative fire management arrangements. This includes joint exercises with these authorities, particularly in urban interface zones, which hone co-ordination during real emergencies.

An example of this close co-operation with local councils is the relationship the QPWS maintains with the Brisbane City and the Pine Rivers Shire Councils with regard to the Brisbane Forest Park. Located on the north-western fringe of Brisbane's built-up area, the Park has an extensive boundary interface with urban residential dwellings and mitigating the risks associated with wildfire is a major focus of management.

In case of wildfire outbreaks, the QPWS has in excess of 500 trained fire-fighters spread across some 130 operational centres, ready to respond. These staff also assist with fire-fighting on neighbouring properties during emergencies.

These actions underscore the importance this government places on its ability to maintain a high state of bushfire preparedness on all lands for which the QPWS is responsible.