

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 782

asked on Tuesday 23 May 2006

MRS E CUNNINGHAM ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES, MINES AND WATER (MR PALASZCZUK)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the impact of reclassification of private and leasehold property under the Vegetation Management Act and Regulations which is significant and as property owners are currently faced with great cost without appeal provisions—

Will the Government (a) implement a notification and consultation process with landowners prior to reclassification of any land, (b) implement on-site review requirements prior to any reclassification and (c) put in place appeal provisions for landowners affected by reclassifications?

ANSWER:

The Environmental Protection Agency's Queensland Herbarium produces regional ecosystem and remnant maps, which underpin the State's vegetation management framework under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*.

(a) The Herbarium's program in making and refining these maps is continuous with periodic releases to ensure that the maps incorporate the best available information including the most recent satellite imagery available through the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water Statewide Landcover and Trees Study program. These periodic updates are critical to ensuring that the regulatory framework can provide the highest level of protection to 'endangered' and 'of concern' regional ecosystems and prevent the loss of biodiversity.

The decision to re-classify a regional ecosystem is not an arbitrary one. It is based on the percentage of the regional ecosystem that remains in the landscape in proportion to its original extent prior to any clearing of the regional ecosystem occurring. These material facts are derived from the best science and most accurate data available.

(b) In many cases, on-site surveys are conducted by Queensland Herbarium botanists or external expert botanists. Indeed, this is often what provides the more detailed information for reviewing the mapping.

For those landholders who have non-remnant vegetation now, and want to ensure future ability to use those areas, they can obtain a property map of assessable vegetation (PMAV). One of the key advantages of PMAVs, particularly for rural landholders, is that the status of non-remnant vegetation can be 'locked in' and will prevail if that vegetation returns to remnant status in the future. This gives rural landholders certainty that they will be able to manage these areas into the future. Some 1400 landholders have lodged PMAVs over their land.

I am advised, while some vegetation is reclassified to a higher status, there are just as many landholders that have their vegetation reclassified from remnant to non-remnant through the release of new mapping. In these cases, the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* would no longer apply to these areas.

- (c) Landholders affected by the changes to the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* that occurred in May 2004 can enquire about their eligibility for financial assistance for vegetation management administered by the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority

As part of the periodic release of mapping, the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water carries out an extensive public awareness campaign to ensure landholders, developers, local governments and the public are aware of the new mapping. Maps are freely available to landholders through the EPA website.

With cessation of broadscale clearing on 31 December 2006, it is expected that future mapping changes and re-classifications will dramatically diminish and thus largely alleviate impacts on landholders.