

**Question on Notice
No. 259
Asked on 22 February 2007**

QUESTION:

MR GIBSON asked the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism (Ms Nelson-Carr)—

With reference to the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service visitor centres and as I have been approached by several constituents who are concerned at reports in the media that the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) are intending to hand over Visitor Information Centres within the Cooloola Coast/Great Sandy region to a Mr Michael Gloster—

- (1) What are the future intentions regarding QPWS Visitor Information Centres within the Cooloola Coast/Great Sandy region?
- (2) Has there been any tender process or open public consultations on any proposed changes?
- (3) Does any correspondence exist between Mr Gloster and Ross Macleod and/or Damien McGreavy from the Beattie Government regarding any proposed changes to Visitor Information Centres within the Cooloola Coast/Great Sandy region?

ANSWERS:

There are no plans by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) to “hand over” any visitor information centres to any individual. However, the Gympie visitor information centre has been transferred to the Cooloola Shire Council to allow them to operate a regional tourism information service.

The QPWS will continue to use Visitor Information Centres within the Cooloola Coast/Great Sandy Region as a means of communicating with the visiting public to ensure safe and enjoyable use of protected areas.

The Noosa Parks Association (NPA) is lessee of the Double Island Point light house precinct and currently operates a visitor information service using volunteers there. This is as a result of their successful bid through an Expression of Interest process to restore and operate the old Lighthouse Reserve for public benefit. Whilst not within the Cooloola/Great Sandy Region, the QPWS has also had discussions with the NPA regarding provision of visitor information and other services at the Noosa National Park Visitor Information Centre.

The QPWS is always interested in exploring options for providing services, including suitable refreshments and merchandise, with suitable community groups at appropriate park visitor information centres. The QPWS is currently investigating the option of calling for Expressions of Interest to provide visitor information and other services at the Noosa National Park Information Centre.

Any proposal would be advertised, and anyone with any questions about the proposal would be able to contact the QPWS for further information.

Another proposal is being considered to establish a QPWS Information Centre on the Noosa North Shore. This follows an invitation from PETRAC, the developer of a new eco-tourism venture on the North Shore, to join them and the Noosa Parks Association in the provision of visitor information services.

The QPWS is currently involved in negotiations with PETRAC based on the premise that prospective relocation would be:

- at no cost to the QPWS;
- that the QPWS will be guaranteed prime location, the most prominent branding, and permanent security of tenure (freehold or equivalent under strata title);
- that the QPWS retain the right to determine internal design, fit-out, visitor information and interpretive design; and
- that a suitable alternative use can be identified for the existing site at Tewantin.

These proposals and any others will be progressed on the basis that they can deliver benefits to all parties, especially the visiting public.

Proposals such as these can be a valuable tool in improving public enjoyment and understanding of our protected areas by freeing up ranger time to allow them to concentrate on visitor management and natural resource management such as fire, weed and feral animal control.

There is no record of any correspondence relating to this matter between my Senior Policy Advisor, Mr Ross MacLeod and Dr Michael Gloster.

As Mr Damien McGreevy is Deputy Chief of Staff in the Office of the Premier, any question relating to correspondence to that office should be directed to the Premier.