

**Question on Notice
No. 319
Asked on 7 March 2007**

QUESTION:

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

With reference to her answer to a recent Question on Notice which revealed that for the last two years in a row, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has failed to meet its target planned burns—

When does she intend to employ the extra staff that would ensure that these burns can take place when weather conditions do permit, instead of being cancelled altogether?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) has not failed in meeting its planned burn targets over the last two years.

In common with all fire management agencies across Australia, the QPWS adopts a rolling program for scheduling planned burns and seizes every available opportunity to deliver high priority burns. As part of its planning process, burns not conducted in a particular year are reviewed and may be deferred or carried over to the following year's program.

Many factors influence whether or not a planned burn will be implemented. These include recent wildfire activity within or adjacent to the planned burn area; seasonal conditions such as prolonged wet or dry periods; the onset of an early fire season; coordinating interagency or neighbour involvement with cooperative planned burns; and weather conditions on the day of the burn. Often limited windows of opportunity apply, particularly in urban interface areas where smoke management is also a major consideration.

It is certainly not a matter of employing extra staff. Ranger numbers generally have increased substantially under the Beattie Government. During 2001-2004 there was an increase of 30 percent in Ranger numbers. The facts of the matter are that the QPWS has some 550 fire trained personnel and professionally maintains the capacity to implement its current planned burning program. This is reflected in the high level of achievement sustained over the last three years where over 1.5 million hectares of planned burns have been conducted by the QPWS.