

**Question on Notice
No. 582
Asked on 17 April 2007**

QUESTION:

MS LEE LONG asked the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism (Ms Nelson-Carr)—

With reference to the Government's policy of not allowing the collection of even tiny amounts of propagating materials (seeds, cuttings etc) from National Parks for commercial purposes, other than under the *Biodiscovery Act*—

- (1) Will she concede that this policy does not ensure protection of the National Park, and in fact can be damaging as was well demonstrated in the Foxtail Palm debacle?
- (2) Will she deny that small amounts of propagating material can be taken from National Parks without threatening the conservation status of the Parks?
- (3) What reason does she have to prohibit the collection of propagating material from Queensland National Parks for commercial purposes, whilst at the same time engaging in the commercial propagation and selling of the endangered Wollemi Pine from a New South Wales National Park?

ANSWER:

- (1) No, I will not concede this. In fact, a national park is dedicated to ensure, to the greatest possible extent, the permanent preservation of the area's natural condition and the protection of the area's natural and cultural resources and values. Under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (NC Act) only nature-based and ecologically sustainable use of national parks is allowed. The management of national parks specifically aims to prevent the illegal removal of natural or cultural resources for commercial purposes; however, it is acknowledged that an Act of Parliament or other State Government policy cannot, of itself, ensure the protection of our State's natural resources in the absence of appropriate enforcement measures.

In the case of Cape Melville National Park, I understand the illegal removal of Foxtail Palm seed was effectively shut-down through enforcement action meaning that officers on the ground prevented the removal of the foxtail palms.

- (2) The taking of biological material from a National Park for commercial purposes was not intended by the NC Act. The only exception to this is in the case of the recently enacted *Biodiscovery Act 2004*, which provides that minimal quantities of biological material may be taken for "biodiscovery" purposes, such as developing pharmaceutical drugs, where it is ecologically sustainable to take the biological material, and the biodiscovery organisation negotiates a benefit sharing agreement with the State.

(3) The Queensland Environmental Protection Agency is not engaged in the commercial propagation and sale of Wollemi Pine. Propagation is being done by Forestry Plantations Queensland under a commercial agreement with the New South Wales Department of Environment and Conservation.