

**Question on Notice
No. 731
Asked on Wednesday 23 May 2007**

QUESTION:

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

With reference to vegetation on private land which is classified and mapped as non-remnant—

- (1) Has the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) done any assessment of the conservation or habitat value of such vegetation; if so, what is the extent of this assessment and has the assessment been documented?
- (2) What policy does the EPA have and what practices have been employed to protect private non-remnant vegetation deemed to have important habitat value?
- (3) Does the Queensland Government see local government assuming a role in protecting any areas of private non-remnant vegetation for habitat purposes; if so, why should it be a local government role rather than a State Government role?

ANSWER:

- (1) The EPA does not systemically classify and map non-remnant vegetation on private land. However, the EPA does map and assess the conservation value of remnant vegetation on both private and public land in Queensland. The EPA applies the 'Biodiversity Assessment and Mapping Methodology' to regional ecosystem mapping, prepared by the Queensland Herbarium, to produce Biodiversity Planning Assessments, which incorporate conservation characteristics such as:
 - Habitat suitability for endangered, vulnerable and rare species of flora and fauna;
 - Connectivity with other areas of habitat;
 - Ecosystem diversity and ecological values;
 - Land tract size; and
 - Relative size of regional ecosystems within the particular tract of land.
- (2) The EPA recognises that private landholders can play a vital role in protecting habitat on their land. The EPA administers and promotes a system of voluntary conservation agreements, between landholders and the Queensland Government, which establish 'nature refuges' under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. The EPA assesses the conservation value of vegetation and other environmental features of such land on a case-by-case basis.

It is pleasing to note that the EPA has successfully negotiated nature conservation agreements with over 240 landholders under its nature refuge program – which helps to protect around 560,000 hectares of important habitat for wildlife.

The Government recognises that non-remnant vegetation can have important conservation and habitat values. And for this reason the *Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2006* does not distinguish between remnant and non-remnant vegetation for the purposes of establishing ‘koala habitat areas’.

- (3) Effective biodiversity conservation in Queensland (indeed throughout Australia) requires coordinated effort by each of the three levels of government – Commonwealth, State and local. Local governments already contribute greatly to this three-tiered approach in important ways.

Firstly, under the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*, local governments prepare and administer planning schemes to guide growth and land-use activities in their areas. Council planning schemes commonly incorporate planning tools to protect vegetation and other biodiversity values on both private and public land.

Secondly, many local governments implement by-laws which specifically limit the clearing of vegetation on private land in an effort to conserve wildlife habitat. Other councils use ‘covenants’ on land titles to protect vegetation on private land.

Finally, the management of public parks and reserves is a widely accepted role of local government. These areas help protect vegetation and other important habitat values. Some local governments even impose a ‘green levy’ on ratepayers in order to fund the purchase of private land to create further parklands to both protect wildlife habitat and provide recreational opportunities for residents.

The Government acknowledges the very important contribution made by local government to the protection of vegetation and other habitat values in Queensland.