

Question on Notice
No. 1368
Asked on Tuesday, 7 October 2008

QUESTION:

MR WEIGHTMAN asked the Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation (Mr McNamara) –

With reference to the Government's environmental credentials—

Will he outline environmental policy actions taken by this Government over the past 10 years?

ANSWER:

National and Environment Councils

- The Government established the Queensland Youth Environment Council (QYEC) following the international Earth Dialogues Forum held in Brisbane in July 2006 which was co-chaired by Mikhail Gorbachev. QYEC reports to me and to the Minister for Education, Training and the Arts.
- The Council provides feedback to the government on key environmental and sustainability matters affecting young Queenslanders, including climate change, water use, renewable energy and wildlife conservation. Council members also act as youth leaders to inspire other young people to take action to promote environmental sustainability. Queensland has taken this initiative because we recognise that young people are our future leaders.
- Queensland continues to play a leading role in the Environment Protection and Heritage Council, working with environment and heritage ministers from the other States and Territories and the Commonwealth to foster national cooperation in areas such as climate change, water, waste management and national heritage policy.

More effective environmental regulations

- In 2007, the government reformed Queensland's litter laws to:
 - expand the single on-the-spot fine for littering to include dangerous littering and littering from a vehicle;
 - allow authorised officers to issue an infringement notice to the registered owner of a vehicle from which a littering offence was observed; and
 - allow an authorised officer to issue a direction to remove litter for illegal dumping of waste.
- This government has worked to make sure that all mines in Queensland comply with the same environmental requirements. In May 2008, the Parliament passed laws to repeal the special status granted to some mining companies which made them exempt from environmental protection legislation.

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) jointly led the preparation of the Queensland government's Sustainable Housing regulations (Stage 1) (with the Department of Infrastructure and Planning):
 - From 1 March, 2006 changes to law requires new houses in Queensland to be more sustainable, ensuring they use water and energy more efficiently. This will result in new houses using less electricity and water.
 - New houses are required to have:
 - water efficient shower roses (AAA-rated or 3 star-rated (as per Water Efficiency Labelling Scheme - WELS);
 - dual-flush toilets (maximum 6/3 litre);
 - energy efficient lighting in at least 40 percent of the house (includes garage floor area);
 - water pressure limiting devices in areas with high water pressure (at 500KpA); and
 - greenhouse efficient hot water systems, such as solar, heat pump or gas hot water.

Further, the government has:

- developed the *Environmental Protection (Waste Management) Policy 2000* and related Regulation;
- implemented major changes to the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* that introduced a new system for the environmental management of mining in 2001;
- implemented major changes to the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* to allow for effective regulation of the oil and gas drilling and pipeline industries in 2001;
- in 1999, incorporated changes to the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* and the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* to streamline approval and assessment processes for environmentally relevant activities, contaminated land and codes of environmental compliance;
- implemented changes to the Environmental Protection regulation in 1999 to better manage and obviate environmental nuisance; and
- made the *Environmental Protection Regulation 1998* to better regulate emitting activities.

Queensland Government Environmental Offsets Policy

- The Queensland Government Environmental Offsets Policy came into effect on 1 July 2008.
- The policy is aimed at helping to protect Queensland's unique environmental values. Strong population growth and intense urban and industrial development have delivered economic and social benefits for Queenslanders, but have also increased pressure on our State's natural resources.
- The Queensland Government Environmental Offsets Policy will help to preserve Queensland's environmental values for future generations. Appropriate development is a necessary part of Queensland's growth, and this policy ensures that economic and social development can occur without an overall degradation of our environment.
- The policy establishes a framework for offsetting the environmental impact of development in Queensland. It provides principles and

guidelines for applying and developing more detailed 'specific-issue' offsets policies for important environmental values such as vegetation and fish habitat. Environmental impacts from development must first be avoided, and if not avoidable, then must be minimised. Environmental offsets may be used to counterbalance any remaining and unavoidable loss of environmental values. The policy will ensure that offsets are used consistently and transparently across the State.

State Coastal Management Plan

- The State Coastal Management Plan establishes the long-term vision for the coast, identifies outcomes and principles for coastal management and includes policies for coastal use and development and the conservation, management and enhancement of coastal resources and their values.
- Regional coastal management plans map and identify specific areas where policies of the State Coastal Management Plan apply and give regional direction for State Coastal Management Plan policies. They may also identify additional regionally specific policies for the purpose of achieving the principles of the State Coastal Management Plan and state whether more locally relevant policy guidance applies in addition to the State Coastal Management Plan policies.
- Regional coastal management plans in place are:
 - Wet Tropical Coast;
 - Cardwell-Hinchinbrook Coast;
 - Curtis Coast; and
 - South East Queensland Coast.

Heritage

- The *Queensland Heritage Act 1992* (Heritage Act) was introduced in 1992, in response to growing public concern about the demolition of the State's historic buildings. The Heritage Act provides for the conservation of Queensland's cultural heritage principally through the creation of the Queensland Heritage Register. Nominations to the Register are received from the community and the Queensland Heritage Council, an independent statutory authority, decides if a nominated place should be entered in the Register. Once included in the Register, changes to a place such as demolition or alteration require approval.
- In 2003 the development provisions in the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992* were incorporated into the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* which provides a single framework for application, assessment, decision making and appeals.
- A review of the Heritage Act was initiated by the Government in 2004 in response to criticism by the development industry that the heritage system was too reactive, had potential to cause delays to development and did not provide the community with enough certainty about which places were of heritage value.
- That review identified limitations in our knowledge of Queensland's important heritage places, and resulted in the government, in December 2004, approving \$2.725 million over five years to complete a survey of Queensland's cultural heritage places. The State-wide survey is designed to ensure the Register becomes a comprehensive list of the State's important historical heritage places. This will increase certainty

for the community and industry about the protection provided to heritage places.

- In 2006 the State-wide survey was complemented by a \$5 million, three-year heritage grants program, Living Buildings and Places.
- The final plank of the heritage review was the amendments to the Heritage Act which were passed in October 2007 and commenced at the end of March 2008. These were the most significant changes to the Heritage Act since it was first introduced in 1992. The changes were designed to deliver increased certainty and will make the Act more transparent, less reactive, and will give the community more direct access to the decision makers.

Other key environmental initiatives were driven in this period. They include:

- The South East Queensland Forests Agreement (SEQFA) was signed in September 1999 by the Queensland Timber Board, conservation groups and the Queensland Government.
- The SEQFA provided for the cessation of timber harvesting in native forest on State forests and timber reserves in the South East Queensland Bioregion. This commenced with the immediate cessation of harvesting on an estimated 425,000 hectares of native forest. These lands were then transferred into 'forest reserve', a holding tenure under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and preparations commenced to transfer them to protected areas.
- To date, some 260,000 hectares have been transferred from forest reserve to protected area, most as national park, following arrangements for the phasing out of incompatible activities such as stock grazing and foliage harvesting.
- A further 150,000 hectares can be transferred over the next 12 to 18 months, following the recent finalisation of horse trail routes in the South East Queensland Horse Riding Trail network and the establishment of a scientific advisory committee and scientific monitoring process to monitor and evaluate horse riding impacts.
- By the end of 2024, timber harvesting will have been completed on the remaining 375,000 hectares of native forests (not plantations) in State forests and timber reserves, and these lands will be transferred to protected area.

Wet Tropics Forest Transfer

- In a process similar to the forest transfer process operating under the South East Queensland Forests Agreement, some 391,000 hectares of former State forests and timber reserves have been transferred to protected areas since 2005, again mostly as national park. A further 92,000 hectares will be progressively transferred to protected area as soon as practicable.
- The Nature Conservation and Recreation Areas legislation was updated.
- Regulations under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* for the management of protected areas and protected wildlife were completely reviewed and updated, culminating in the new regulations taking effect in August 2006.
- This was the first complete overhaul of these regulations since their creation in 1994, and provided more effective processes for managing commercial activities on protected areas, such as commercial tours and

filming, by providing for these activities to be conducted under negotiated agreements with up to 10-year timeframes in order to give businesses greater flexibility and certainty.

- The regulations also provided for improved management of recreational activities in protected areas and better management of protected wildlife, for example by clarifying permit requirements and permit processes.
- The *Recreation Areas Management Act 1988* and its subordinate legislation, used for the coordinated management of recreation in iconic conservation and tourist areas such as Fraser Island and Green Island, was completely reviewed and updated, culminating in the *Recreation Areas Management Act 2006* and the *Recreation Areas Management Regulation 2007*.
- This legislation assists visitors to declared recreation areas by allowing a consistent set of rules and regulations to apply across tenure boundaries. This cross-tenure management process also assists in protecting national park, marine park and other lands and waters in the recreation areas.
- The review of the recreation areas legislation also achieved close consistency with regulations under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

Marine Conservation

- There has been a number of significant policy initiatives undertaken in the past 10 years which support the conservation, protection and management of the marine environment in Queensland, some of these include:
 - the 1998 government commitment to establish a continuous system of marine parks from the Gulf of Carpentaria to Moreton Bay which has been substantially achieved through the introduction of the Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park and Great Sandy Marine Park;
 - the 2000 release of the 'Marine Protected Areas in Queensland – a draft planning framework' report which examined approaches to marine conservation and planning and identified future policy directions;
 - the 2004 introduction of the Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park which maintains an ongoing complementary approach to marine park management with the Australian Government in the Great Barrier Reef region;
 - the 2006 commencement of the new *Marine Parks Act 2004* and *Marine Parks Regulation 2006*. This legislation updated previous marine park legislation and provides a comprehensive strategy for establishing, conserving and managing marine parks in Queensland;
 - the 2006 commencement of the Great Sandy Marine Park which achieves a government commitment for conservation of marine environmental values in the Great Sandy region;
 - the 2008 new Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan which was announced following an extensive zoning plan review and major public consultation program. The new zoning plan increased the amount of the marine park in "no take" marine national park (green) zones from 0.5 percent to 16 percent. All of the 16 broad-scale habitat types are now represented in green zones, and expand the network of go-slow areas for turtles and dugong to reduce risk of boat strike on these species; and
 - both the Great Sandy Marine Park and new Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan which provide for protection of seagrass, reef and

mangrove habitats and protection of shorebirds, dugongs, and whales, while still providing a range tourism, recreational, and commercial fishing opportunities.