

Question on Notice
No. 1834
Asked on Wednesday, 26 November 2008

QUESTION:

MRS PRATT asked the Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation (Mr McNamara) –

With reference to the heritage listed Jimna Fire Tower in the Jimna State Forest and the rejection by the Somerset Regional Council of an offer from Forestry Plantations Queensland to take ownership of the Jimna Fire Tower believing that maintenance of heritage listed infrastructure should be a State Government responsibility—

- (1) Will the government take responsibility for maintaining heritage listed structures such as the iconic Jimna Fire Tower?
- (2) If not, will the government offer recurrent funding to the Somerset Regional Council to maintain the structure?
- (3) Will the government invite stakeholders to the planning table to create long-term solutions for the fire tower?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for her question. The Jimna Fire Tower, a very recognisable and unique type of heritage place, was entered in the Queensland Heritage Register on 23 July 1999.

At 47 metres tall, the Jimna Fire Tower is an imposing example of a three-legged timber fire tower and a landmark in the area. It is the tallest tower of its type ever to have been built in Queensland and is constructed from immense iron bark poles arranged in a triangular plan.

Although once a prevalent feature of forestry landscapes, this type of observation tower is becoming increasingly rare as they are now being superseded by cameras mounted on poles. The Jimna Fire Tower was designed and constructed in the 1970s by Arthur Leis, who played a major role in the development of fire towers in Queensland from the 1960s to the late 1980s.

- (1) While the Environmental Protection Agency is the underlying landholder of all State Forests, Forestry Plantations Queensland is responsible for managing the land, including the Tower. Forestry Plantations Queensland acknowledges that the Jimna Fire Tower requires work to stabilise and secure its structure. In 2004, timber specialists from the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries inspected the Tower and identified timber decay within the ironbark framework. Due to concerns that the Tower might be dangerous during strong winds, public access was closed. Forestry Plantations Queensland has been

consulting with the local community and is currently seeking the most cost effective long-term solutions to address the structural and safety problems.

(2) Heritage places are unique and it is imperative that their future needs be assessed and planned for. The Bligh government has provided record levels of funding to heritage owners for essential repairs, stabilisation and core structural conservation works at heritage listed places. This funding is available through the Living Buildings & Places Heritage grant program to private owners and to local governments who are owners of heritage listed places. As the Tower is not owned by the Somerset Regional Council, I am not aware of any funding that is available to them.

(3) I understand that Forestry Plantations Queensland has engaged in ongoing discussions about the future of the tower with the local government, with interested community groups and with the Queensland Heritage Council. Forestry Plantations Queensland has advised that it is currently investigating options to stabilise the tower and to further restrict access to ensure that public safety is not compromised.