

Question on Notice
No. 361
Asked on Wednesday, 12 March 2008

QUESTION:

MR HOOLIHAN asked the Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation (Mr McNamara) — With reference to the recent extreme weather events—

How has the Parks and Wildlife Service met the challenge of road access to national parks and nearby residential areas, particularly to Byfield National Park?

ANSWER:

The Environment Protection Agency (EPA) closed many of the roads and recreational areas in the Byfield National Park due to extreme rainfall conditions earlier this year.

All park roads, camping areas and day-use visitor areas at the Byfield National Park were reopened to the public on Friday 14 March 2008

Walking tracks at the Upper Stony Recreational area will remain closed until repairs can be carried out.

The temporary closure of the Five Rocks Road through Byfield National Park cut off the only practical vehicle access to the Stockyard Point Township and the beaches and camping areas within the national park. Residents were still able to access the township via the sea and beach (which is the legal access to the town).

I am sympathetic to the difficulties experienced by the residents and the impacts on businesses in the area due to these temporary closures. Repairs to the road will be ongoing and the time frame for completion is weather dependent.

The EPA is responsible for the management of this road and all other access tracks within the Byfield National Park.

It is part of the EPA's responsibility to maintain roads in a safe condition. The high rainfall events in the area caused significant damage to the Five Rocks Road.

This damage was further exacerbated by vehicle use and vehicles becoming bogged on the road.

The decision to close the road was made to minimise further damage and to improve visitors' safety at the National Park.

The high water table in the area has meant that gaining access for repair opportunities is difficult.

Staff and contractors have made repairs to the damaged sections of road.

Byfield National Park staff maintained contact with Stockyard Point residents and the local Emergency Management Coordinator during the period the road was closed in the event they needed assistance.