

Question on Notice
No. 383
Asked on Thursday, 13 March 2008

QUESTION:

MS MALE asked the Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation (Mr McNamara) — Will the Minister outline what his department is doing to protect areas of land with significant conservation values while allowing for sustainable production to continue?

ANSWER:

Climate change requires many adaptations by us as a society, and that new approaches are needed to conserve our biodiversity and build resilience in our natural environment.

I am strongly committed to a robust National Parks network as the cornerstone of conservation in Queensland, but it is crucial that we complement it with the widespread use of partnerships with the community to increase the levels of conservation elsewhere. A partnership approach with landholders enables us to safeguard the protection of significant conservation values managed by private landholders, and for building connectivity and resilience of nature areas across as much of Queensland as possible.

That partnership approach, respecting the effective land management shown by many within Queensland's rural communities, has been applied with outstanding success through the Nature Refuges Program.

The Nature Refuges Program works directly with landholders as equal partners sharing a common interest in appreciating and wanting to conserve our special natural and cultural heritage values. Further, it explicitly recognises the need for all parts of the community to play a role in conservation and effective land care.

I recently announced the creation of seventeen new nature refuges totalling almost 6,000 hectares of privately managed properties, bringing the total number of Queensland nature refuges to more than 250, protecting more than 550,000 hectares of biodiversity across the state.

The EPA's Nature Refuges Program is now not only engaging with landholders across every part of Queensland, but is partnering with a wide range of organisations including AgForce, the Queensland Farmer's Federation and most Natural Resource Management Bodies as well as many conservation-focussed organisations.

The success of the program is attributable largely to carefully assessing conservation values, and then jointly negotiating a well considered balance

between conservation and production needs according to the specific circumstances of each individual property.

As a result, nature refuges include examples where production on a sustainable basis is continued across the property, others where separate areas for conservation and production are agreed, and still others where the land use has effectively changed to privately-managed national park. They all have in common that both parties are fully agreed on the final outcome: protecting significant conservation values in perpetuity.