

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1211

asked on Tuesday, 15 September 2009

MR HORAN ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES, MINES AND ENERGY AND MINISTER FOR TRADE (MR ROBERTSON)—

QUESTION:

Is the Minister aware that the changing of vegetation status from white to blue under the moratorium on regrowth clearing and the aggressive approach of his department to landholders trying to clear lantana has led to a serious fire risk on the eastern slopes of the Great Dividing Range which will endanger the south east and eastern suburbs of Toowoomba?

ANSWER:

The Government takes bushfire management and public safety very seriously – all the more so in the light of Victoria's catastrophic wildfires during the summer earlier this year and the death toll that resulted.

To ensure that regrowth vegetation protection measures do not contribute to increased fire hazard, the Government made the fire management activities, currently exempt from assessment under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*, exempt also from assessment under the regrowth moratorium. This means that landholders in moratorium areas may use controlled burns to reduce hazardous fuel loads with a permit from a fire warden, and may clear fire management lines and fire breaks without a permit under the moratorium.

Further, the regrowth moratorium in no way limits the powers of the Commissioner of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service to require an occupier of a premises to take measures to reduce the risk of a fire occurring on their premises. This can include issuing a direction to remove vegetation.

With regards to weed management, the regrowth moratorium does not affect the management of non-native weeds. Landholders are encouraged to continue managing non-native weeds on their property.

The only time landholders will need to consult with the Department of Environment and Resource Management is when weed control activities involve clearing moratorium regrowth. In this instance landholders will need to apply for a permit from the department. Departmental officers will be able to assist landholders in applying for approval to clear native vegetation as part of weed control activities.

There is no intention for this Government to change the approach to fire and weed management in any future regrowth regulations. I encourage landholders who are concerned about managing fire hazard or weeds to contact departmental staff for assistance.