

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1403

asked on Wednesday, 7 October

MR RYAN ASKED THE MINISTER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY (MS JONES)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister outline what steps are being taken to protect important koala habitat in South East Queensland?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Government acknowledges that immediate action must be undertaken to address the decline in the SEQ koala population. A Government Koala Response Strategy has been in place since December 2008 to better protect koalas and to expand koala habitat in the region by 2020.

This month I released our latest package of reforms in relation to koala protection.

The package includes:

- \$15 million focused on buying new habitat and rehabilitating existing habitat;
- Compulsory acquisition powers for koala habitat outside the urban footprint;
- New planning laws for councils to minimise koala impacts when assessing development applications in key koala areas;
- New controls for councils to ban dogs in new developments in koala habitat; and
- New planning laws to allow land swaps in and outside the urban footprint for strategic koala habitat corridors.

In addition, our Strategy addresses a number of key threats to koalas and includes the development of a model local law to assist local government in reducing threats to koalas from dogs.

To help protect important koala habitat in the region, the Queensland Government has also put a freeze on the clearing or disposal of State owned land, except in cases where there is a need to provide urgent social infrastructure.

To ensure informed planning for the future, the Strategy required koala habitat values to be mapped urgently. The intention of this was to assist in informing decision-making and development of future policy. This mapping has now been completed and a copy of the koala habitat values map can be found on the Department's website.

A key focus of the Strategy is the development of a State Planning Policy (SPP) for koala conservation by the end of 2009. The overriding goal of the proposed SPP is

to maintain the viability of all major koala populations across the region by increasing the size of their habitat. The development of this SPP has been fast tracked, with the first draft now available.

I am pleased to announce that as part of habitat protection measures, more than 87,000 hectares of parks and local government areas have been expended since December, providing protection for more than 52,000 hectares of koala habitat.