

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1712

asked on Tuesday, 10 November 2009

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

QUESTION:

Why has a succession of Labor policy announcements failed to prevent a 64 per cent decline in the koala population since the original 1996-1999 estimate despite the koala being listed as a species 'vulnerable to extinction' in the South East Queensland (SEQ) Bioregion in 2004?

ANSWER:

As you know it is the State Government that has taken the foresight to protect koala habitat for the future in the face of poor development approval practices by Councils in some areas of south east Queensland.

Since 1995, the Queensland Government has introduced a number of koala conservation policy measures to address the decline in south east Queensland koala populations, the current being the *Nature Conservation (Koala) Conservation Plan 2006* and Management Program 2006-2016. With koala numbers continuing to decline, the Government has decided to take drastic steps to halt this decrease in south east Queensland koala populations.

The south east Queensland Koala Conservation State Planning Regulatory Provisions will be in effect by the end of the year and the new State Planning Policy for koala conservation will come into effect early next year. The overriding goal of the new policies is to maintain the viability of all major koala populations across the region by increasing the size of their habitat through local government planning schemes.

While the new planning instruments are being developed an immediate ban on koala bushland habitat clearing in designated areas has been announced to complement the interim measures already applying on State land until the new State Planning Regulatory Provisions are in place.

This month, I released the Government's latest package of reforms, including:

- \$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.

We have also secured more than 52,000 hectares of koala habitat for conservation as protected areas just this year, and more recently, removed approximately 900 hectares of koala habitat in the Thornlands and Southern Redland Bay area from the urban footprint in the South East Queensland Regional Plan.

In addition we are introducing exclusion fencing and other koala safety measures for all new main roads in koala habitat and a model local law is also being developed to regulate dog control in koala habitat.

This is in stark contrast to the opposition who made no moves whatsoever to protect koalas during the last election and would not rule out clearing koala habitat for trail bike use.

Regardless of the lack of support from your side of politics we will continue to build on our actions including the freeze on the clearing or disposal of State land, the development of a new State Planning Policy for koala conservation, koala-friendly design for all new main road construction and a model local law for councils to regulate dog control.