

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1039

asked on Thursday, 16 June 2011

MR POWELL ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (MS JONES)—

QUESTION:

With reference to Queensland's 10 Great Walks—

Will the Minister provide (a) the methodology used to assess usage levels, (b) the maintenance funding acquitted on each in 2010-11 to date (each reported separately) and (c) any usage projections for 2011-12?

ANSWER:

While this question was asked of Minister Jones, due to recent changes in Ministerial responsibility, I am now the Minister responsible for this matter and therefore provide this response.

- (a) In June 2010, the last of the \$6.5 million 'More Great Walks' project was completed and Queensland now has four more Great Walks - Carnarvon Gorge, Cooloola, Whitsundays Ngaro Sea Trail and Conondale Range. Although all 10 Great Walks are primarily long distance trails, catering for multi-day walkers, most have shorter day walks built in to cater for family groups and less adventurous walkers.

As multi-day walkers need to book their campsites, their use is measured using the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) on-line booking system. To date, approximately 48,000 camper nights have been registered on the Great Walks. In addition to those walkers who camp, there are day walkers who explore sections of Great Walks. QPWS does not have pedestrian counters permanently in place to accurately measure the number of day walkers on each Great Walk but, based on extrapolations from counters on some track sections, QPWS estimates that more than 100,000 day users have also used parts of the Great Walks.

The table below shows a 2009-10 and 2010-11 comparison of multi-day walkers' usage levels on the Great Walks of Queensland. I would like to point out to the member that this years' summer of natural disasters would have had an impact on visitor numbers to these iconic places.

Great Walk	Opened	Total days/nights spent walking & camping		
		Total	2009-10 Financial Year	2010-11 Financial Year
Conondale	02/07/10	1,062		1,062
Cooloola	27/03/10	1,272	233	1,039
Whitsunday Ngaro Sea Trail	02/06/10	125	8	124

Great Walk	Opened	Total days/nights spent walking & camping		
		Total	2009-10 Financial Year	2010-11 Financial Year
Carnarvon	04/08/09	2,787	1,196	1,591
Gold Coast	21/03/08	2,566	736	928
Mackay Highlands	13/04/06	1,157	110	90
Sunshine Coast	27/12/05	8,718	1,576	1,902
Wet Tropics	28/10/05	863	206	117
Fraser Island	17/10/04	25,062	3,108	2,970
Whitsunday (Conway)	31/07/04	4,580	690	589
TOTALS		48,192	7,863	10,412

- (b) QPWS does not budget or account for Great Walks maintenance costs separately from management unit allocations. The 2010-11 expenditure estimates based on ranger records for the maintenance of the tracks, toilets, camp pads and signage, but excluding capital expenditure and repairs following natural disasters (separately funded under disaster recovery provisions) and fire control line maintenance, are as follows:

Great Walk	2010-11 Financial Year Maintenance (\$)
Conondale	41,000
Cooloola	32,000
Whitsunday Ngaro Sea Trail	90,000
Carnarvon	12,000
Gold Coast	126,000
Mackay Highlands	12,000
Sunshine Coast	103,000
Wet Tropics	25,000
Fraser Island	18,000
Whitsunday (Conway)	20,000
TOTAL	479,000

- (c) Given that the 27 per cent growth in multi-day Great Walk usage since 2009-10 is largely attributable to the opening of three new Great Walks, but factoring in that 2010-11 usage was adversely affected by wet weather and cyclones, QPWS is forecasting a 10 per cent increase in usage during 2011-12, compared with 2010-11.