

Question on Notice

No. 516

Asked on Wednesday, 7 August 2013

MS TRAD asked the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (MR EMERSON) —

QUESTION:

With reference to page 93 of the Discontinued Measures statement for the 2013-14 budget which shows that, despite setting a target of zero for the number of significant environmental incidents at road projects investigated by regulatory agencies, six such incidents occurred in 2012-13, will the Minister advise (a) the nature of each incident, (b) where each incident occurred, (c) when each incident occurred, (d) which agency or agencies investigated each incident, (e) the outcome of the investigations and (f) why these events will no longer be reported on?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for South Brisbane for the question. The details of the environmental incidents investigated by regulatory agencies for the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) were:

- An incident occurred on the Wills Development Road in North-west Queensland on 23 January 2013, involving vehicles entering a previously identified cultural heritage exclusion zone. The incident was reported to the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP), who advised that TMR should consult with the Traditional Owners to ensure suitable measures are employed in the future.
- Two incidents occurred on the Blackbutt Range Reconstruction project on the North Coast. One incident involved the discharge of sediment from the Blackbutt Range Reconstruction project during heavy rain on 7 February 2013. A second incident identified on 17 August 2013, involved clearing of vegetation and spoiling of material within a State Forest without permission. Both incidents were identified by TMR and immediately reported to the EHP who investigated the incidents and issued written warnings to the contractor involved.
- An incident adjacent to the Warrego Highway near Oakey involved the clearing of 1.12ha of a bluegrass grassland listed as a critically endangered threatened ecological community under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. This ecological community is the most endangered ecological community in Queensland. The incident was identified on 4 March 2013 by a member of the community and immediately inspected by a TMR officer. All commonwealth and state regulatory authorities have been notified. The Commonwealth Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities' (DSEWPAC) investigation is ongoing but in anticipation of the outcome a remediation plan has been developed for implementation once climatic conditions are acceptable.. Any DSEWPAC requirements not addressed in the existing remediation plan will be adopted. As per normal TMR practice, the outcomes of incident will be documented and communicated across industry and research institutions.
- An incident on the Bruce Highway near Childers involving material placed in and around a waterway. This incident was identified by a TMR officer on 11 April 2013 and reported to the EHP who advised TMR to rectify the incident by removing and rehabilitating the site.

- TMR also reported an incident at Reedy Creek on the Warrego Highway west of Miles, involving a temporary culvert that was installed without approval from the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) prior to installation. DAFF were advised of the unauthorised structure on 28 February 2013. Following DAFF investigation of the structure, TMR submitted the necessary documentation complying with DAFF requirements. The works have now been completed.
- It was determined that this Service Delivery Statement measure be discontinued. As TMR continues to undertake internal monitoring of environmental incidents and implements continuous improvement strategies to enhance environmental performance, it was not considered an effective or efficient measure of the Service Delivery Statement.
- TMR is committed to quarterly public reporting of environmental incidents and the associated continuous improvement strategies in 2013-14. Details of individual incidents will be subject to the provisions of the *Right to Information Act 2009*. This report will be available within one month of the end of the quarter on the TMR website. TMR also has reporting obligations to a range of commonwealth and state agencies where information about the progress of an incidents investigations can be obtained through normal right to information processes.