

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 573

asked on Wednesday, 21 August 2013

DR FLEGG ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE PROTECTION (MR POWELL)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise what steps the government is taking to protect koala populations and habitat in Queensland and what support is being provided to assist research to ensure sustainable koala populations in Queensland generally and, in particular, in the Moggill/Bellbowrie area?

ANSWER:

The Newman Government is taking real and practical action to ensure the long-term protection of Queensland iconic koalas. A suite of initiatives is being implemented under the \$26.5 million *Investing to protect our koalas* policy.

The *Koala Habitat Program* is investing \$22.5 million over three years to strategically acquire land in south east Queensland to:

- create new koala habitat;
- increase the connectivity of south east Queensland's mature koala habitat; and
- provide additional recreational opportunities for the community wherever possible.

Expressions of interest will be sought from the public each year to identify suitable properties, with negotiations currently underway with shortlisted property owners from the first round.

The *Koala Rescue and Rehabilitation Grant Program* will contribute \$800,000 over four years to boost the capacity of koala rescue and rehabilitation services. Applications for round one of the *Koala Rescue and Rehabilitation Grants Program* closed on 7 December 2012.

The outcome of round one of the program saw 11 recipients being granted almost \$280,000 with grants ranging from \$1,200 to \$182,000. This included funding to the Ipswich Koala Protection Society to update/replace existing equipment, establish new purpose-built cages, and equip new members with rescue equipment. These grants will provide a much needed financial boost to organisations delivering invaluable koala rescue and rehabilitation services. Round two was launched by the Premier on 28 August 2013.

In addition, the *Koala Research Grant Program* is injecting \$3.2 million into research into koala disease to address key knowledge gaps associated with koala diseases and other preventable causes of mortality and illness. Eight high quality scientific research projects are being funded under the *Koala Research Grant Program* under

the initial round. The significantly-funded projects encompass different aspects of key research priority areas, focusing on koala diseases and other preventable causes of death, injury and illness in Queensland's iconic koala population.

The programs together will provide tangible outcomes to better inform koala management across Queensland, particularly in the south east where key koala populations are located.

Beyond the \$26.5 million commitment, landholders can partner with government to restore and manage koala habitat on their own land under the *Koala Nature Refuges Program*. To date, this program has funded the restoration of over 227 hectares of koala habitat on 35 nature refuges.

In addition to these practical actions, in south east Queensland strong regulatory measures are in place. The *South East Queensland Koala Conservation State Planning Regulatory Provisions* protect priority koala habitat from new development. Priority habitat within the Moggill/Bellbowrie area is afforded protection under this measure. Additionally, there are significant koala protection measures contained within the recently adopted Moggill Bellbowrie District Neighborhood Plan, implemented by Brisbane City Council.