

Question on Notice

No. 812

Asked on 19 November 2013

MR MULHERIN asked the Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning (MR SEENEY) –

QUESTION:

Will the Deputy Premier confirm that resource activities will neither be prohibited nor exempt within the Government's Priority Living Areas unlike the previous Urban Restricted Areas and if so, what resources will be provided to local governments to adequately assess any application for a resource activity in a Priority Living Area?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Mackay for his question.

The Regional Planning Interests Bill was introduced into the Legislative Assembly on 20 November 2013. The State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Parliamentary Committee is to report to the House on the Regional Planning Interests Bill by 17 March 2014.

The Bill as tabled does not prohibit a resource activity or other regulated activity within a priority living area (PLA). Unlike the one-size-fits-all blanket prohibition of resource activities under the urban restricted areas regime, the Bill instead requires a proponent to obtain a regional interest authority where a resource or regulated activity is proposed within a PLA. The Bill provides for the activity to be assessed on its merits against criteria prescribed in the Regulation to the Bill. Where an activity cannot demonstrate compliance with the criteria to the satisfaction of the chief executive, the chief executive can issue a decision which refuses the activity.

Local governments will be the assessing agency for any assessment application made for a resource activity or other regulated activity within a PLA. Consistent with the government's policy to recognise and respect the role of local governments to plan for their local area, clause 50 of the Bill provides that where the assessing agency is the local government, the chief executive must give effect to any recommendations made by the local government when making a decision. If the local government provides a response which refuses a resource activity within a PLA, based on its assessment function and the assessment criteria, the chief executive must issue a decision refusing that same resource activity.

The Regulation will include criteria for assessing resource project proposals within PLAs. In addition, clause 83 of the Bill provides for the chief executive to make guidelines about assessment applications or prescribed criteria for deciding assessment applications.

PLAs are identified through the regional plan. The current urban restricted area only applies to towns with a population greater than 1000. The Central Queensland and Darling Downs Regional Plans identify PLAs for towns with a population above 200 people, giving these communities a much greater say on how resource activities are managed in close proximity to urban areas.