

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 142

asked on Thursday, 6 March 2014

MS RUTHENBERG ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE PROTECTION (MR POWELL)——

QUESTION:

Will the Minister explain what the Newman Government is doing to protect the local koala wildlife in Kallangur during the construction of the Moreton Bay Link Project?

ANSWER:

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

The *Koala Rescue and Rehabilitation Grant Program* will contribute \$800,000 over four years to boost the capacity of koala rescue, transport and rehabilitation services. The majority of Round One projects are nearing completion and the announcement of successful applicants for Round Two funding is imminent.

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 currently being funded.

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 and increase the connectivity and protection of mature koala habitat. To date, the program has purchased nine properties totalling 505 hectares, including approximately 230 hectares of land being rehabilitated for future koala habitat.

Beyond the \$26.5 million commitment, landholders can also partner with government to restore and manage koala habitat on their own land under the *Koala Nature Refuges Program*. Current achievements under this program are the restoration of over 454 hectares of koala habitat on 37 nature refuges.

In relation specifically to the Moreton Bay Rail Link Project, specific details of protective measures would be best sought from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. However, the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection is aware that unprecedented measures are being taken to protect koalas and other wildlife. The Department of Environment and Heritage Protection has worked closely with the Department of Transport and Main Roads to provide necessary approvals and support for these measures. This includes a detailed tagging and monitoring program for koalas in the project's vicinity, a substantial habitat offset program that will ensure a long-term net benefit for koalas and a last resort capacity to translocate at risk koalas as part of a research study.