

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 242

asked on Tuesday, 1 April 2014

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

QUESTION:

With reference to koala numbers—

- (1) What is the koala population and any measure of the population health (if available) in (a) Noosa National Park, (b) North Stradbroke Island and (c) Moggill?
- (2) What effect has the bushfire earlier this year on North Stradbroke Island had on the island's koala population and food supply?

ANSWER:

- (1) The most recent surveys for koalas in Noosa National Park were undertaken by the Queensland Government in late 2013. In the areas that were surveyed, three koalas were observed, and one of these displayed signs of disease. Relative to other parts of south east Queensland, the numbers of koalas in Noosa National Park would appear to be very low. The cause for this decline is not well understood but it is likely to be a combination of factors, including marginal habitat quality, disease and fatalities due to dogs and cars.

North Stradbroke Island contains a relatively healthy and large population of koalas. No systematic surveys have been conducted across the island, but anecdotal evidence and some local studies suggest that prior to the January 2014 fires the population could have been as high as 500-1000 individuals with only a small proportion of the island's koalas showing physical symptoms of disease.

There is currently no information available regarding the number of koalas or health of koala populations in Moggill. However, the Queensland Government's Koala survey team will be conducting surveys throughout Brisbane City Council region, including in Moggill, over the next four months.

- (2) Given the unpredicted and intense nature of the fire on North Stradbroke Island in January 2014, it is difficult to estimate its full impact on the island's koala population. It is known that approximately 60% of the island was scorched by the fire and it is suspected that the fire may have caused the death of some koalas. Because threats to koalas on the island are minimal and the population is reasonably robust, it should recover to previous levels as trees regain their leaves and food availability is restored. The Department of Environment and Heritage Protection is supporting SEQ Catchments in a bid for federal funding to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the fire impact.