

Question on Notice

No. 792

Asked on Tuesday, 11 August 2020

MS S BOLTON ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF, MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND MINISTER FOR THE ARTS (HON L ENOCH)—

QUESTION:

With reference to recent media claims that the Queensland Treasury Corporation had warned the state government that its ongoing under-investment in national parks and other protected areas was ‘not sustainable’—

Will the Minister clarify and outline how this will be addressed and the timeline for doing so including reaching the target of 17 percent protected areas in Queensland?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

The Palaszczuk Government is continuing to increase the State’s protected area system. Protected areas in Queensland have increased by over 1.2 million hectares since February 2015 – up from 7.56% to 8.26% of the State. The protected area system in Queensland now covers an area more than twice the size of Tasmania and includes the largest private protected area network in Australia. Queensland is also the first State to create special wildlife reserves – a new class of protected area to provide national park level protection for private land of exceptional natural and cultural value.

In 2019, the Queensland Government also announced that it would transfer up to 20,000 hectares of State forest in south east Queensland where logging will cease to protected area by 2024.

The Department of Environment and Science is currently developing a Queensland Protected Area Strategy, which establishes the future strategic direction for the State’s terrestrial protected areas including a pathway for sustainable growth and effective management of Queensland’s protected areas.

The Government has also recently announced increased funding for the management of protected areas. In June 2020, \$8.93 million for the National Parks Works and Jobs Boost was announced as part of Queensland’s plan for economic recovery. This is on top of the existing \$45 million investment in revitalising infrastructure and \$7.5 million for enhancing park management which is delivering improved visitor facilities, new opportunities for Queensland’s nature-based tourism industry and increased regional employment.

In 2012, the former LNP Government cut \$10 million from the annual Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) salaries budget resulting in the loss of more than 60 rangers across the State. Since 2015, the Palaszczuk Government has continued to rebuild this important frontline workforce to recover the loss.

The important role of QPWS Rangers is complemented by Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger groups that work to conserve Queensland's important ecosystems and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage in locations stretching from Cape York to the Bunya Mountains. Since 2015, the Queensland Government has increased funding for the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program to over \$12 million per annum, increasing the number of funded rangers to over 100 across 24 regional and remote communities.