

WESTERN RINGTAIL POSSUM — BUSSELTON — REVIEW

6321. Hon Paul Llewellyn to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for the Environment

I refer to the strategic review of the habitat of the endangered western ringtail possum in Busselton, and I ask —

- (1) Is the Minister aware that the previous Minister for the Environment, Dr Judy Edwards, initiated a strategic review of western ringtail possum habitat in the Busselton area in October 2005?
- (2) If yes to (1), has this review been completed?
- (3) If no to (2), —
 - (a) why not;
 - (b) does the Minister believe that two and a half years has been sufficient time to complete this review; and
 - (c) when does the Minister expect the strategic review to be completed?
- (4) If yes to (2), —
 - (a) has the Department of Environment and Conservation identified habitat for consolidation and maintaining ecological linkages as well as identified opportunities for educating the community about the importance of maintaining habitat values as requested by the previous Minister;
 - (b) has the Department of Environment and Conservation in its strategic review identified key habitats to be protected and enhanced as part of planning and development processes; and
 - (c) will the Minister table a copy of the strategic review?
- (5) If no to (4)(a), why not?
- (6) If no to (4)(b), why not?
- (7) If no to (4)(c), why not?
- (8) Has the strategic review been undertaken in consultation with local authorities, relevant Government agencies and the community as stated by the previous Minister for the Environment?
- (9) If no to (8), when will local authorities, relevant Government agencies and the community be consulted?
- (10) How many hectares of western ringtail possum habitat remains on private land in the Busselton area as per the strategic review?
- (11) What is the estimated population of western ringtail possums in the Busselton area as per the strategic review?

Hon SALLY TALBOT replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) No, however considerable progress has been made with analysis using a geographical information system and associated fieldwork. Preliminary findings were publicly presented on three occasions during 2007, and preparation of a draft report has commenced.
- (3)
 - (a) The absence of readily available baseline data for the majority of the privately owned lands containing habitat has hampered the review process. In addition some aspects of ringtail possum ecology and population dynamics are not adequately understood and will require further research. Nevertheless, preparation of a draft report is progressing.
 - (b) No. This is a complex matter involving conservation of a threatened species and development of private land for housing and other purposes and the adequacy of conservation areas.
 - (c) A draft report is expected to be completed towards the end of 2008.
- (4) (a) -(c) Not applicable.
- (5)-(7) Not applicable.
- (8)-(9) The review is not yet completed. An interagency working group will be established to provide technical input and guidance into the content and recommendations of the draft report. Local authorities and relevant government agencies will be represented on the working group. Input from key community stakeholders will also be sought.

- (10) As of late 2006 approximately 150 patches of remnant vegetation one hectare or greater in area have been identified that are of value as ringtail possum habitat. Analysis of available data indicates privately owned lands totaling 553 hectares comprise 72 per cent of all potential habitat in the Busselton area.
- (11) The strategic review is not yet completed. The review will focus on the availability of suitable habitat to conserve the species in a regional context.