

WESTERN RINGTAIL POSSUM — BUSSELTON — PROTECTION

6320. Hon Paul Llewellyn to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for the Environment

I refer to the clearing of endangered western ringtail possum habitat in the Peppermint Park subdivision in Clydebank Avenue Busselton, and I ask —

- (1) How many hectares of western ringtail possum habitat has been approved for clearing in the Peppermint Park subdivision in Clydebank Avenue, Busselton?
- (2) How many western ringtail possum dreys have been found in the area approved for clearing?
- (3) How many western ringtail possums have been found in the area approved for clearing?
- (4) How many western ringtail possums will be displaced by the clearing?
- (5) Does the Minister accept that all surrounding habitat is fully occupied by either western ringtail possums or common brushtail possums?
- (6) If no to (5), why not?
- (7) If yes to (5), does the Minister accept that displaced western ringtail possums will either be killed at the time of vegetation removal or die soon after from predation or starvation?
- (8) If no to (7), why not?
- (9) Does the Minister believe that the loss of western ringtail possum habitat at Peppermint Park is acceptable?
- (10) Does the Minister believe that the future of the western ringtail possum is secure given that the Government continues to approve clearing of prime habitat?

Hon SALLY TALBOT replied:

- (1) Approximately 10.06 hectares of the 17.57 hectares of vegetation remaining on the site is proposed for clearing for urban development.
- (2) In a survey conducted in 2006, 83 dreys were located in the study area. Of these about 37 were in the area proposed for clearing.
- (3) In two surveys conducted in 2006, 41 and 51 animals respectively were observed in the study area. Approximately 26 and 24 animals respectively in each of the two surveys were observed in the area proposed for clearing.
- (4) It is not possible to determine exact numbers but up to 50 per cent of the animals observed on site could be expected to be displaced by the clearing of vegetation.
- (5) The survey results to date indicate that much of the surrounding area is occupied by either western ringtail or brush tailed possums.
- (6) Not applicable
- (7) Although it is expected that there would be competition for resources between displaced animals and resident animals it is not expected that this impact will affect all western ringtail possums.
- (8) The proponent is required to prepare a western ringtail possum management plan which contains actions to reduce the impact on western ringtail possums at the time of vegetation removal and to manage retained habitat and the possum population.
- (9) The Department of Environment and Conservation assists the planning authorities and proponents in identifying acceptable solutions to the often competing demands of development for housing and environmental values, while ensuring, as in this case, that approved developments do not significantly increase threats to the conservation status of the species involved.
- (10) With the current demand for land for urban development along the coastal strip there will continue to be pressure on the habitat of western ringtail possums. The Government is committed, however to ensure that the species will be conserved.