

LITTLE PENGUINS — RESEARCH

2006. Mr C.J. Tallentire to the Minister for Environment:

With regard to the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority, I ask:

- (a) has there been any recent research into potential threats to Little Penguins in the Perth metropolitan area;
- (b) what are the major threats and how are the colonies adapting to these threats; and
- (c) what management plans are in place to conserve these Little Penguins and their colonies?

Mr A.P. Jacob replied:

- (a) The Department of Parks and Wildlife conducts and supports ongoing research in collaboration with Murdoch University to assess the condition of little penguins, which includes:
 - population modelling of breeding penguins;
 - understanding the feeding habits of breeding adults;
 - suitability of artificial nest-boxes to augment natural nest burrows; and
 - rate of occurrence of blood parasites.
- (b) The key threatening process impacting little penguins in the Perth metropolitan area is warming ocean temperatures, which affects the availability of food. The penguins are also potentially impacted by disturbance by boats and people.

Little penguin breeding success has been monitored at Penguin Island since 2006. However, there is not yet enough information to determine if the population is successfully adapting to these pressures.

- (c) The Shoalwater Islands Marine Park Management Plan 2007–2017 includes strategies for protecting little penguins.

Impacts on little penguins are managed by closing Penguin Island to visitors during the peak breeding period, using temporary beach closures during periods of high ambient temperatures to allow penguins undisturbed access to the ocean, limiting vegetation disturbance and weed infestations, and providing artificial nesting boxes.