

CARNABY'S BLACK-COCKATOO

696. MR N.W. MORTON to the Minister for Environment:

I understand that Birdlife Australia recently released its 2014 Great Cocky Count report. Can the minister please advise what the government is doing to protect this threatened species given that the report indicates that the decline in the total number of Carnaby's black-cockatoos in the Perth–Peel coastal plain is around 15 per cent per year?

Mr A.P. JACOB replied:

The Great Cocky Count report—for those members who are not aware—was released on 26 August this year and is a community-based, citizen science project that began in 2006. It has been run annually since 2010 and now involves over 1 000 volunteers. This Great Cocky Count, which focuses on just one-third of the bird's distribution, observed declines in the number of Carnaby's black-cockatoos within the Perth metropolitan area. The reduction in sightings noted within the Perth metropolitan area could be driven by a number of factors, including drought, an increase in car-strike incidents, and clearing of the pine plantation generally that has now become a supplementary food source for the cockatoo. It should be noted that the Carnaby's black-cockatoo is a highly mobile species occurring over a large area of the south west. Therefore, we do not know in the first instance whether these birds are utilising other habitats and resources that were not surveyed, but the key question is this: what are we doing to ensure that a recovery plan for the Carnaby's black-cockatoo is well established? We have a recovery plan, which brings together —

Mr C.J. Tallentire interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Gosnells, I call you to order for the second time. I am interested in hearing about the Great Cocky Count. I want to hear it.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Our recovery plan brings together organisations such as the Department of Parks and Wildlife, Birdlife Australia, the Perth Zoo and Murdoch University. The plan is focused on addressing key issues such as the feeding and breeding requirements of these birds, the population viability, and the health and disease status of the species. Since 2008–09, more than \$20 million has been invested, mainly by industry bodies through environmental offsets that have been linked to development approvals, into offsets to protect Western Australia's three species of black cockatoo. A key point is the Carnaby's habitat and the impact of the removal of the Gnangara pine plantation, which is known as an important food source. This is acknowledged and is being considered at the highest level within government. Significant work is going into this through the strategic assessment of the Perth and Peel regions under the commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Given that they do fly, this is taking a strategic approach to planning across the entire Perth–Peel region to quantify the impact of pine tree removal and the impact of other proposed developments on the Carnaby's black-cockatoo and also to identify a range of offset measures in a strategic manner across that entire land division.

One comment that I will briefly make about finding the balance and why the strategic assessment is so important as a vehicle through which to assess is that the Carnaby's black-cockatoo is an incredibly important species and we are putting a lot of work into this. However, we cannot do species conservation by focusing on just one species in isolation. When a pine plantation has become a supplementary food source—obviously, it plays an important role in that space—it also causes other ecological problems up and down the system by draining the shallow aquifer, and then there are the wetland issues that arise out of that. It is an incredibly delicate balance. It requires a large body of work, and this government is doing that large body of work. This Liberal–National government is committed to ongoing initiatives to protect this threatened species.