

WESTERN RINGTAIL POSSUM — SPECIES SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

4959. Hon Sally Talbot to the Minister for Mental Health representing the Minister for Environment

- (1) Is the Minister aware of Commonwealth Government advice that the western ringtail possum has disappeared from 90 percent of its original range due to a number of threats including habitat loss due to land clearing and logging, and introduced predators such as foxes and cats, with the most significant threat to the species currently being the ongoing clearing of habitat in the Busselton area for urban development?
- (2) Does the following information from the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) website about strategies for the recovery of the western ringtail possum represent the entirety of DEC's conservation efforts in relation to the western ringtail possum: '1. Conserving existing populations within public lands managed by the Department of Conservation and Land Management. 2. Improving the species conservation status, through habitat management (including fox control) and translocations to increase their numbers. 3. Minimising the impact of land developments through in-situ conservation and translocations. 4. Ensuring that derelict (injured, orphaned or nuisance) animals are rehabilitated where possible and released into the wild where chances of survival are maximised.'?
- (3) If no to (2), what other strategies are being employed by DEC to ensure the survival of this species?
- (4) If yes to (2), what evidence is there that DEC's strategies are effective? In particular, have previous well-documented failures to translocate successfully the species been overcome, so that translocation is a viable option for species recovery?
- (5) If translocation is a viable option for species recovery, how have the possible causes for the lack of translocation success (including drought, mesopredator release, prey switching, unsuitable habitat at release sites, anthropogenic disturbances, disease and competition with sympatric native species) been avoided?
- (6) Does the translocation of western ringtail possums ever involve 'hard release'?
- (7) Is radio collaring one of the devices used to monitor the translocated possums?
- (8) If yes to (7), what evidence about the success or failure of the translocation is provided by the use of radio collars?
- (9) If translocation is not a viable option for species recovery, why is it still listed as a strategy for species recovery?

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

The Minister for Environment has provided the following response:

- (1) The Department of Environment and Conservation has advised that a 2007 brochure available on the Commonwealth Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities website includes these statements.
- (2) No
- (3) Other strategies include field survey, wildlife disease studies, revegetation of degraded habitat and improved management of existing habitat.
- (4) Not applicable
- (5) The criteria used to determine the success of past translocations have varied according to the objectives for each translocation. Information gained from monitoring outcomes has been used to inform management of ringtail possum populations and subsequent translocations following an adaptive management framework.
- (6)–(7) Yes.
- (8) Radio collars provide information on the movements, home range, activity and dispersal of each collared possum. Collars can also provide information on mortality and allow the possums to be resighted to confirm wellbeing, or recaptured to allow assessment of health and reproductive status, and to replace or remove transmitters that are nearing the end of their operational life.
- (9) Translocation is one of the options in strategies to conserve possums.