



Office of the
Premier of Queensland
Minister for Trade

For reply please quote: *ENV/KD – TF/20/2403 – DOC/20/49282*

14 April 2020

Ms Jo-Anne Bragg
Executive Director, Brisbane
Environmental Defenders Office
edoqld@edoqld.org.au

1 William Street Brisbane
PO Box 15185 City East
Queensland 4002 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3719 7000
Email ThePremier@premiers.qld.gov.au
Website www.thepremier.qld.gov.au

Dear Ms Bragg

Thank you for your letter of 21 February 2020 regarding the protection of threatened species following the recent bushfires. I have been requested to reply to you on behalf of the Premier and Minister for Trade.

The Queensland Government is also concerned about how the recent severe bushfires in Queensland have impacted native wildlife. The Department of Environment and Science (DES), including the Queensland Herbarium, has made significant progress in assessing the impacts of the latest bushfire season on our biodiversity and regional ecosystems.

A spatial analysis of the bushfire extent identified 465,000 hectares of regional ecosystems was burnt. Most regional ecosystems affected are well adapted to fire and, fortunately, are expected to recover condition over time. This includes several restricted extent regional ecosystems, the recovery of which will continue to be assessed and monitored to determine whether a change in conservation status under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* is warranted.

Some areas of rainforest regional ecosystems were also burnt and their response to fire is not known. The affected areas are a small percentage of the remnant extent and the bushfires are unlikely to lead to a change in conservation status as they are already highly protected. However, this situation will continue to be monitored.

Fire scars do not affect the remnant status of vegetation under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*. It cannot be removed (that is, remapped as Category X) as a result of natural causes, such as fire.

Queensland's threatened species most at risk as a result of the fires were identified by modelling their distribution against bushfire extent. Species with more than 10 per cent of their distribution impacted by fire have been assessed by experts to determine likely fire impacts and recovery strategies. This analysis has been used to determine key recovery priorities. The Queensland Government has recently received initial Federal Government funding of \$1.5 million to address some of these threat management actions.

Queensland's Species Technical Committee (the Committee), which is responsible for assessing the conservation status of Queensland species under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, has expedited the process for our most threatened species, including some affected by the bushfires. On 25 March 2020, the Committee assessed 74 flora and eight fauna species endemic to Queensland. It was recommended that several species have their conservation status lifted to 'critically endangered' as a result of the threatening processes associated with the bushfires.

The Queensland Government is committed to taking the necessary actions to manage the impacts on, and restoration of, Queensland's biodiversity following the latest severe bushfire season. The Premier noted the advice of the Environmental Defenders Office on the interim and further measures to protect Queensland's biodiversity.

The Premier will ask the Honourable Leeanne Enoch MP, Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts; the Honourable Dr Anthony Lynham, Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy; and the Honourable Cameron Dick, Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning, who were copied into your original letter, to give consideration to your suggestions, particularly the legislative and procedural proposals, when the Queensland Government's has addressed its urgent priorities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is anticipated that the outcomes of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements may also have implications for Queensland's wildlife management and species conservation, including biodiversity, habitat protection and restoration.

Again, thank you for raising your concerns with the Premier and I hope this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Spinks', written in a cursive style.

DENISE SPINKS
DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF