



Hon Dr Steven Miles MP
Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and
Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef

Ref CTS 22040/15

15 OCT 2015

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Level 13
400 George Street Brisbane Qld 4000
GPO Box 2454 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3719 7330
Facsimile +61 7 3220 6231
Email environment@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to your letter of 16 September 2015 enclosing a copy of Petition No. 2451-15 and 2432-15 (e), lodged in the Queensland Legislative Assembly. This letter comprises my response to these petitions and I request that, under Standing Order 125, you table this response by Thursday 15 October 2015.

I can advise that the Government did not withdraw funding from the Garners Beach Cassowary Rehabilitation Centre. Rather on 21 July 2015, Rainforest Rescue advised the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP) that it no longer had sufficient funds to continue to operate the centre. I am pleased to advise that in response, and at my request, EHP provided \$50,000 in supplementary funding to enable the Garner's Beach Cassowary Rehabilitation Centre to continue to operate.

Since that time, EHP has spent over \$30,000 to upgrade the centre and to enhance its capacity to respond to cassowary incidents, so that it is now capable of receiving and rehabilitating adult cassowaries. Adult cassowaries can reach over two metres in height and are potentially significantly more dangerous to handle than cassowary chicks. These modifications mean that adult cassowaries can be isolated where necessary from carers during all feeding and pen maintenance activities at the centre.

I am pleased to advise that the centre accepted its first adult cassowary into care on Wednesday 9 September 2015, and that the bird was successfully released into the wild on Friday 18 September 2015.

I can also advise that EHP has recently negotiated for temporary assistance to be provided by local rangers from the Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing, on an 'as needs' basis. EHP has also recently commenced delivery of a comprehensive new training program for those rangers and wildlife management staff involved in the rescue, rehabilitation and release of sick, injured or orphaned cassowaries. Changes have also been made to EHP's out-of-hours telephone hotline for reporting sick, injured or orphaned cassowaries, so that callers are now placed in direct contact with a departmental officer, instead of going through an external service provider.

These improvements are in addition to the Expression of Interest (EOI) process launched by EHP, to seek support from potential partners willing to provide or support rehabilitation services for cassowaries. Such support could include partnerships, financial sponsorships or in-kind support for the management of the centre. Rainforest Rescue has agreed to continue its current service while the EOI process is underway, so at no time has the Garner's Beach Cassowary Rehabilitation Centre actually been closed.

The department's level of commitment to rescue sick, injured or orphaned cassowaries and in maintaining public safety will be continued. Hence cassowary first response rescue assistance will continue to be provided by EHP wildlife officers to the extent that their overall wildlife management responsibilities will permit.

The suite of measures outlined above have significantly increased the overall capability available for responding to sick, injured or orphaned cassowaries in the Wet Tropics region.

Cassowary conservation remains a high priority for the Queensland Government, and it is continuing important work to support the wild cassowary population in the Wet Tropics region, estimated to be around 4,400 birds, by securing and conserving much of the available cassowary habitat in the protected area estate. Currently more than three-quarters of the cassowary's essential habitat in the Wet Tropics region lies within protected tenures, such as National Parks and Nature Refuges.

I appreciate being provided the opportunity to outline the efforts of my departments in cassowary conservation in the Wet Tropics region.

Yours sincerely



DR STEVEN MILES MP
Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and
Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef