

BLACK-FLANKED ROCK WALLABIES

17 September 2007

The Hon. A.L. EVANS: I note the state government's ambitious plan launched in July this year to save all native species in this state from extinction. It is a very fine aspiration which Family First supports. On page 16 of *The Advertiser* dated Monday 1 October it was reported that only 50 black-flanked rock wallabies were left in the wild in South Australia. It was claimed that they are near extinction. The article went on to say that presumably 15 of those 50 have been moved to captivity in Monarto Zoo for their conservation.

When my office researched the conservation status of this animal—known as the warru in the APY lands—I was surprised to learn that the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) in its red list gives this species the lowest level of concern rating. This places the black-flanked rock wallaby on the same conservation status category as a common pigeon. I acknowledge that there can be problems with the IUCN's rating not being comparable with the rating used in Australia, but I note that the IUCN is promoted on the state government's SA Central website as being the world's largest conservation-related organisation. I also know that the University of Queensland published research in April last year finding that the allocation of public funding for the conservation of species related closely to the conservation status of competing species on lists such as the IUCN's red list.

My questions to the minister are:

1. Am I wrong about the black-flanked rock wallaby's true conservation status with the IUCN?
2. If I am right, what is the state government doing to increase the conservation status of the species with the IUCN?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO (Minister for Environment and Conservation, Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Minister Assisting the Minister for Health): In relation to the black-flanked rock wallaby, I have been advised that it is indeed a threatened species. The advice is that in some areas it has almost become extinct, and it is an important part of the state's natural wildlife. It is the species that is indeed under significant threat, to the point of almost being extinct in some areas where, at various times, it has been abundant. In terms of the IUCN ratings, I am happy to get further details about that and how it equates with the ratings for threatened and extinct species in the state, and how we prioritise our programs.

It has been a very important program, and I understand that to date it has been quite successful, where the local indigenous groups on the APY lands have worked with the Warru. When the females have become pregnant the young have been removed from their pouch and flown to Monarto zoo, where we have a threatened species program, and those young are implanted into a surrogate wallaby. I think it is the yellow-footed rock wallaby that is used as the surrogate species. If my memory serves me, I understand that they make extremely good surrogate mothers. By removing the young from the mother very early in the pregnancy it means that the female black-flanked rock wallaby will become pregnant again more quickly, and thus we are able to speed up the process of increasing these numbers. As I said, in terms of the ratings and rankings, I am happy to take that part of the question on notice and bring back a response.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

REPLY TO QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

Subject: Black-Flanked Rock-Wallaby (Warru) Conservation

In reply to Hon AL Evans MLC on 17 October 2007.

Hon Gail Gago MLC: "I have been advised that:

Under IUCN red list ratings, the Black-flanked Rock-wallaby, at a *species level*, is rated as Lower Risk Least Concern. However, there are three subspecies and two geographic races of Black-flanked Rock-wallaby.

The MacDonnell Ranges Race occurs in the APY Lands of South Australia, and in nearby areas of Western Australia and the Northern Territory. The MacDonnell Ranges Race is known as *Warru* by locals of the APY Lands.

At a *subspecies level*, *Warru* is rated as Vulnerable under the IUCN red listing ratings. This is also the national rating under the Commonwealth's *Environment, Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999*.

In South Australia, *Warru* is listed as Endangered under the *National Parks & Wildlife Act 1972*, due to its continued serious rate of decline in both range and abundance. In the matter of about 80 years it has gone from being a widespread and abundant animal in the north-west of the State to its current situation of only three known colonies totaling about 50 individuals. Two other colonies have become extinct in the past decade or so.

While IUCN listings provide a useful global overview of the status of the world's animal and plant species, these listings are infrequently updated and therefore seldom reflect current knowledge and action. Local listing under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 is the determinate of action."