

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Question on notice

Tuesday, 11 June 2013

86. Hon Robin Chappie to the Minister for Mental Health representing the Minister for Environment.

I refer to the Minister's comments on cane toads, reported in *The West Australian* of 22 May 2013, and I ask:

- (a) when does the Government expect the cane toads to reach Perth:
 - (i) and each of these places in the Mining and Pastoral Region:
 - (A) Halls Creek;
 - (B) Fitzroy Crossing;
 - (C) Derby;
 - (D) Broome;
 - (E) Port Hedland;
 - (F) Karratha; and
 - (G) Onslow;
 - (b) what action is the Minister going to initiate to deal with the effects of cane toads on the environment in each of these locations;
 - (c) how much funding will the Minister allocate for each of the strategies or initiatives described in answer to (b);
 - (d) what action is the Minister taking to inhibit the further migration of cane toads across Western Australia;
 - (e) what action is the Minister taking to eradicate cane toads from Western Australia;
 - (f) when does the Minister expect the action in (e) to have succeeded; and
 - (g) how much funding will the Minister allocate for each of the strategies or initiatives described in answer to (d) and (e)?

Answer

The Minister for Environment has provided the following response:

- (a) Cane toads are not expected to reach Perth in the foreseeable future through natural movement across the landscape. Research has demonstrated that the cane toad population can expand at around 50 kilometres per year depending on environmental factors and suitable habitat. Currently cane toads are found approximately 100 kilometres due west of Kununurra.
Based on the current rate of expansion, it is expected that cane toads will likely reach Halls Creek during the next wet season which starts October 2013 and may reach Fitzroy Crossing in two to three years; Derby two to three years; and Broome in five years or more. The actual rate of expansion may be higher or lower, depending on specific seasonal conditions. It is not certain that toads will reach Port Hedland, Karratha and Onslow given the vast desert and semi desert areas they would need to cross.



- (b) In 2009 the then Minister for Environment released the *Cane Toad Strategy for Western Australia*. The strategy outlines a number of actions, including:
- installation of drop off points for members of the public to dispose of cane toads; and
 - provision of information to assist the community to identify, handle and euthanase cane toads in safe and humane way.

There are also a number of quarantine measures in place to prevent the human-induced movement of toads, including the use of a cane toad detector dog to inspect high risk freight such as produce, building materials and other non quarantined freight that leaves cane toad infested areas. This strategy also includes increased signage and information of the risk of hitchhiker toads, placed at Broome, Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek and freight depots throughout the region.

- (c) Since 2008, the Government has invested over \$4 million to implement the cane toad strategy.
- (d) Please see the response to (b).
- (e) To date there is no effective means for eradication (total removal) of cane toads. This includes manual removal of toads and using barrier fencing. Control of cane toad numbers may be possible in some discrete areas, with intensive management. DEC is continuing investigations to identify innovative means to reduce cane toad impacts and biological control possibilities.
- (f) Please see the response to (b) and (e).
- (g) Please see the response to (c). Funding of individual strategies or actions vary from year to year, depending on priorities.